

# *Private faith is not true fellowship*

## **Private faith is an oxymoron**

Faith In Jesus Christ is very personal, but true faith can never be private.

The motto of private faith. "*you will be like God.*" (Gen 3:5) Independent and with a sovereign private domain. The devil plays with the mind, so as we think, we are.

A.W. Tozer 'Man: the dwelling place of God '

The apostolic fellowship is also a fellowship of truth. The inclusiveness of the fellowship must always be held along with the exclusiveness of it. Truth brings into its gracious circle all who admit and accept the Bible as the source of all truth and the Son of God as the Saviour of men. But there dare be no weak compromise with the facts, no sentimental mouthing of the old phrases: "We are all headed for the same place.... Each one is seeking in his own way to please the Father and make heaven his home."

We say we are saved by faith alone, but faith is never to be lived alone. Faith never isolates us from the people of faith. God saved us into His church, to live in community, to grow up together so that everyone can be made complete in Christ. And while we are growing up, God commands us to share faith with the lost world. There is no such thing as "private faith" if we are members of the body of Christ.

The devil makes sure there is danger in making ourselves known in the church so that it can easily be interpreted as self-promoting, thus giving others an opportunity to remain in hiding. The last thing Jesus Christ would have done would be to hide from His disciples who He really was, because knowledge is needed for life. He was also in the business of showing His disciples who they really were. And because He made Himself known, the world said He was self-promoting and they killed Him. You would expect that from the world, but surely not the church!

## **Private faith is not true faith**

The world has a private faith, and this is not true fellowship. Nothing has changed. Savings our lives in the world, or keeping ourselves private in the church is hiding from God and each other.

The world applauds the right of the individual to privacy. The world does what is right in their own eyes. When we come to live in Christ, we surrender our declaration of independence and commit ourselves to live with Christ and His people.

Even then, when we are included in the family of God, we bring with us some of the independent thinking of the world, and we don't realise we are actually living in denial of that which we claim to cherish so much. We work out our sanctification by putting to death the mind of the flesh. Even as we make progress there is still more work to do. The one another teaching we have received from God is to correct what we don't see as flesh working against His will. When we hold to a little bit of private faith, we not only deny the unity of the body of Christ, but we deny Christ as Lord and master over all of our life.

Unfortunately, all of us have hidden ourselves to some degree or other, because all of us have naturally erected a veil between ourselves and others. We may be saved from the darkness into the light of the kingdom of God, but we still tend to live in the shadows and resist complete exposure to the light of the Spirit needed to be made complete in the body of Christ.

Col 1:28

Our hiding becomes obvious if we want to talk about what God is doing or has done in us in an attempt to break down the barriers. If we attempt to enquire about what God is doing in the lives of others, the subject is often quickly changed. If we are zealous for the truth of the scriptures and the one life of the church, we will question everything that has a hint of separation, and then we may well be considered to be trouble makers.

Private faith is an excellent means of promoting external religion without the power to overcome our separation from one another because it denies the existence of the Spirit to govern all things in the life of the believer. *If*

*we walk by the Spirit we will not carry out the desires of the flesh.*

Gal 5:16

Private faith is a shell without the living yolk of the chicken inside. It may be in the nest beside the living eggs but does not share in their potential for life.

Private faith has become so normal that AW Tozer even wrote that those who seek authenticity in Christ will find that the saint has to walk alone.

The pain of loneliness arises from the constitution of our nature. God made us for each other. The desire for human companionship is completely natural and right. The loneliness of the Christian results from his walk with God in an ungodly world, a walk that must often take him away from the fellowship of good Christians as well as from that of the unregenerate world. His God given instincts cry out for companionship with others of his kind, others who can understand his longings, his aspirations, his absorption in the love of Christ; and because within his circle of friends there are so few who share his inner experiences he is forced to walk alone. The unsatisfied longings of the prophets for human understanding caused them to cry out in their complaint, and even our Lord Himself suffered in the same way. AW Tozer *Man the dwelling place of God*

Working in harmony with one another we are to be making disciples by putting on Christ. Jesus shows us that this means a close daily walk where we cannot hide who really are. With private faith we think we are discipling when we hardly spend any intimate time with others.

If a Christian today can feel like such a stranger in his community, should he then hold to a private faith? This article addresses this question, and explains that if you allow your faith to be pushed to the private sphere, it will have a massive impact on your life as a whole. Ultimately, private faith is no faith. The only defensible answer to secularization is to let one's faith permeate all of his life. Source: *De Reformatie*. 3 pages. Translated by Bert Stulp.

**Private faith is the power of one to the exclusion to others**

How urgent is the need to put to death what is earthly in us. Private faith must be killed off if we are to be free from all hypocrisy and the practice of claiming to have higher standards or more noble beliefs than is the case. The power of one is the life of the unbeliever who walks according to their own understanding isolated from God. Because our sanctification is incomplete, every baptised believer has some level of private faith that must be put off depending of the thoroughness of their sanctification.

Many believe they can pray and be Christians without the Church because they want to know God on their own terms. They are unwilling to conform to the teaching of Jesus while insisting we accept their terms. *'But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.'*

1 Tim 4:1

Having a relationship with God is about us, one another, gathered together with the Lord. God calls us to daily communion with Himself and each other as the Church. The defensive armour of private faith will never spontaneously surrender the inner self to others and allow others to require they surrender all they have decided is their own domain.

Therefore, since His people are the Church, and the Church is replicating His Holy and righteous life of humility and sacrificial love, everyone who comes to His Church should have left their private life behind and now have nothing to hide in order to grow together into the image of Christ who is our God and saviour; as we grow in our knowledge by obedient faith, for the love of Christ controls us.

2 Cor 5:14

The only thing that impedes spiritual growth is the flesh and our private interests of the world that we cling to through the blindness of pride in order to protect ourselves from having to change. This is the tyranny of sin that we must repent from daily by surrendering to Christ as Lord and Saviour so we can put to death all that remains of self-protection and the pride of the flesh that has contaminated our souls. Sin hides behind the idea we must protect ourselves, but God calls on us to offer this self as a living sacrifice. *'I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.'*

Rom 12:1

## **Private faith denies Christian accountability**

John Piper.

The point behind accountability isn't just to share about sin and hear the hard words of rebuke. Though the wounds of a friend are a sign of their faithfulness, accountability should also be a time to build each other up and encourage each other toward God's goodness and grace found in the cross of Christ. My friends and I reminded each other who we were in Christ: accepted completely, daughters of the Most High, and forgiven. We reminded each other that we knew Jesus, he was ours and we were his, and we could draw near to him and his throne of grace. In my experience, there were five characteristics that make accountability particularly life-giving:

1. We expressed a genuine love for one another because God had transformed our friendship into sisterhood. We were devoted to one another. John 15:17; Rom 12:10
2. Each week we had a choice to extend grace or judgment. We could display the love and grace that God had already extended through the judgment of Jesus on the cross. Rom 14:13
3. Each of us had an opportunity to be honest, which we may not have accomplished had we not established the habit. Eph 4:25
4. There were times we would need to extend forgiveness. Honest friendship sometimes leads to hurting one another. Also as one person might go through a season of struggling with the same temptation we'd learn to bear with our friend. Rom 12:16; Col 3:13
5. We bore each other's burdens in prayer. Gal 6:2

As much as people resist the imperatives of one another accountability clearly explained to us in the Scriptures, is to the same degree their faith is about themselves, and not about living for and serving the purpose of the whole body of Christ. This insular private religion is not conducive to denying ourselves and laying down our life for others as Jesus commanded.

Faith is not a private matter, it is the work of God convicting sinners, which brings about repentance, so that an obedient relationship with God in Christ is possible in conjunction with His body the church. Private faith is actually in opposition to God's will.

This new life in Christ reveals our cooperative responsibility as a people of God, for we are all working together with Christ by the power of the Spirit. God is the originator of all things pertaining to life; and man is to respond to His work. The children of God are one Spirit with God and each other in order to reflect the life and purpose of their Father. This faith life produces family affection for all who are of the same faith.

Without the family cooperation needed for life in the Lord, there is no effective affectionate life in Christ. True faith changes our desire to work together for His pleasure. And Godly faith turns our private desires into His desires as we live as one family. True faith makes His divine purpose our corporate responsibility. Without this disposition of the heart of faith motivated by love, we will bight and devour one another.

Our Father has given us brothers and sisters to assist us in the process of our spiritual growth. But when we insulate ourselves from their God given ability to help, we are simply clinging to the pathetic idea that our faith is a private matter, and of no business of others in Christ.

Therefore, private faith prevents accountability which is needed for our unity in Christ. No accountability means no unity. Unity is only possible when the scriptures alone are the measure for our life. When we won't agree on all that scripture teaches, we will not make ourselves accountable to one another. When we require things that are not supported by scripture, or when we take scriptures out of their proper context, we ensure disunity.

Faith comes from God by the word of God, all for the glory of God. Faith is about God giving us the belief that unites us to the living Christ, to serve Him only. So, faith is never to be about "me." Faith requires the death of "me." Faith is communal, it is never singular, because faith is the glue that binds all believers to one life in the living Saviour Jesus Christ.

Those who have received saving faith from God are cemented into His family, which, in love and divine intimacy, exceeds even the most loving and supportive family of man. Unless the attitude of self-denial that was in Christ is in us, we won't live for those who God has chosen to be given to Christ who still live in the world, having not as yet heard the gospel in the depth of their heart and repented.

Much of what passes for Christianity today is about "me" and it is idolatry. Real followers of Christ have undertaken to die to "me" daily by denying themselves and taking up their cross. And they have commenced to eject out of the mind all inclinations of selfish influence that remain from the natural man.

If we have a privatised faith, we are not the slaves who only live for Christ, and we don't serve Christ for the good of others. If we are not living as slaves for the purpose of working for His redemption for sinners, we are only giving Him lip service. No, No. *'Not by way of eye service, as people pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.'*

Eph 6:6

The default setting of our thinking from the old man of sin is about "me" what I want, how I feel, what I enjoy, and my plans for happiness, all this in exclusion from the presence of God. Therefore, the default way of the mind needs to be on Christ so our faith is not about us as separate individuals, our belief, our worship, our plans, our privacy. *'But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.'* 1 Cor 6:17

As with all the instructions of God, we can understand that the opposite to what He commands will be evident in a lack of holy motivation and obedience. Therefore, if we are not loving, and living for Christ, we are still living for ourselves. He died for all, *'one has died for all, therefore all have died;'* (2 Cor 5:14) so that we would be one life in Him, living His life by the power of the Spirit as the children of obedience.

When we separate the living Christ from the true doctrine of the church, we end up with a wooden edifice where love no longer has a part in meaningful fellowship. Love has then taken on another meaning that denies intimacy with God. The living organisms has passed away. The life of the Spirit no longer produces the passion for self-sacrifice in building up the body in love and making disciples of all nations.

Without the unity of one life in Christ we have form without power. Faces without personal knowledge and intimacy. Law without grace in our relationships. Religious structure without the sacrificial blood and bones that is needed to get results. We have an oorganisation without the living organisms. Arms without legs. Head knowledge without a heart to reveal

the living Christ. We have private religion without soul connectedness. We conduct church as a business in the world without the life of God. We lose the core of our mission to make and train discipline from all nations and instead live for the outward form without the reality of His inner life by the Spirit.

### **Private faith serves the interest of the individual**

*“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”* Luke 6:45

Many people claim Jesus Christ as Lord, but few people live obediently with Him on a daily basis. Many have taken up religious practice without receiving Jesus Christ to direct their life in the way He lived with God.

Many will try to live good lives and believe they are entitled to be accepted into heaven, but have never repented from self interest in order to live for Him who died and rose again on our behalf.

Multitudes wear a cross as an ornament, but it is hard to find someone who has denied themselves and taken up their cross to follow the example of the One who died in our place so we can walk with Him. The visible Church is not always the one that has the indwelling Spirit for power to love sacrificially as Jesus requires.

But we need not be deceived. Jesus tells us how we can judge a person’s character. What is on the inside is what the tree is really “made of” and will determine what kind of fruit the tree produces. Jesus says that the same is true of people.

In Luke 6:45, Jesus says that people can be judged by what they do because these things reveal what is really going on inside the person: *“A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”* If we want to know what is on the inside of a person, we simply watch their actions; and the way they speak on a daily basis. This is being realistic. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*

What the heart values most it serves most. It depends on whether it is for the world or the kingdom of God. How are we spending our days, are we seeking to please ourselves or God? Do we invest our time pursuing the

things of the world, or are we seeking to walk with God to fulfil His desires?

It is then we can know what He meant when He said: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

John 13:34-35

The love that comes from God is a desire rising in our heart for Him and His people, that desire is not just some enjoyable fleshly emotion. The love of God goes far beyond our quest for sweet emotional desire. In Christ we make ourselves sacrificially available, always honest, showing compassion and mercy to everyone. These are unavoidable factors that belong in any worthwhile relationship, especially with those who commune in the Church. The love of God includes our affections but is driven by self sacrifice.

God's desire is that those who are loved can show the richness of His life by loving others. This desire for love to be made evident in us is the grace of God that we now share in Christ. The Father's love in Christ comes as the result of costly sacrifice. This willingness to deny self for the good of others is how God's love can be readily apparent in the lives of those who are in communion with God. *"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

John 13:35

The love of God moves the heart to be sensitive to the touch of God. The quality of God's love is clear in the Bible. *'Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.'*

1 Cor 13:4-7

The love of God cannot be shown fully if we remain private and secretive. True love requires we are vulnerable and transparent as we deny ourselves and look to the spiritual needs of others as our Father in heaven does. A failure to deny self will mean our words of love will be superficial and a worthwhile community will be impossible. *"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it"*

Luke 9:24

When we are too emotionally attached to self-preservation, we need to change the object of our affection to Christ, so we walk by faith and not by sight. God offers us refuge from feeling that we have to put up barriers and be on guard so we can come together with nothing to hide.

### **With private faith we use religion to hide from one another**

Even now in the church we say we want to know the truth, and the truth exposes darkness, but we only want the truth as long as the truth is not about us, because we can't handle the truth that exposes our darkness with the light of God. We are in Christ but we are still fallible creatures of a fallen world. We tend to measure others by ourselves. And our reactions to what we don't understand are often consistent with the nature of our personal brokenness.

A good example is given by the Lord Jesus when He talks about how we want to deal with a little thing in someone's life while we want to hide a storm in ours. (Matt 7:3-5) Serious self-exposure to the truth of God's light is the first step towards communion with God and each other. Our God has come to set everyone who is in Christ free from their darkness and spiritual death so they can have His light and life. Consequently, Jesus began preaching by saying: *“repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.”*

Matt 3:2

In other words, if we want to be free from the darkness we have to turn away from self-determination and spiritual isolation; and place ourselves completely under the rule and dominion of the God of Light. The Salvation of Christ moves us from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Light in communion with Christ. *“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”* John 8:12

The Lord Jesus takes our death and darkness and gives us His Life and Light. The communion of light is consistent with a life of humility, obedience, vulnerability, and transparency; all of which are to be self evident in the life of Christ in His Church.

Our sanctification from God is the process of growing in the light by putting to death that which is still earthly and dark in us and causes fractures in the community of love. Life in the light requires we are vulnerable and transparent so the Spirit can work through us. This is the

condition of the heart of Paul who wrote: "*For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*" 1 Cor 2:2

If we consider the depth of intimacy the Holy Spirit makes possible between man and God, and between one other; it is often likely we are often very shallow people, because we are not always open to what God has given us in communion with each other.

### **Private faith avoids intimacy as if it threatens our life**

To live a life pleasing to God we need to ensure we remain open and available to all in the Church with the love and devotion of God. But this is not always the case as Paul reminds us. "*We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us.*" 2 Cor 6:12

When we hold God at a safe distance, we are afraid of His intimacy, because we have a fear of being exposed to His Holy presence, and we forget our hearts are an open book to His piercing gaze. In the same way we also avoid real depth of intimacy with one another because we want to remain as we are; we fear we won't be liked if what we accept in ourselves is known in the Church.

Because of our own doing, we claim we desire intimacy with God's people but we avoid honest vulnerable transparency like the plague. Public confession of personal sin in the Church is avoided at all cost, so the words of James are skipped over as if they were never written. "*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*" James 5:16

If we are hiding our inner self from the scrutiny of others, we are also hiding ourselves from God, regardless of what we claim otherwise. Godly intimacy is what God calls fellowship. The Holy Spirit is continually asserting His right through providence to lead us into true fellowship. Are we submissive to His efforts to bless us together as one life in the presence of God?

In order to maintain private faith and our inner privacy, we need to have built up barriers to keep others from intruding into our private space. This been the case, not only are we preventing others from getting close to us, but we are excluding ourselves from real intimate involvement with others in communion.

Our flesh wants to protect itself from having to grow up on the inside in terms of our emotionally, our minds and spirituality, and we don't like struggle with the result that we fail the test of becoming vulnerable and open to the heart of others and God Himself.

When we love as Christ makes possible by giving us His life, we open ourselves up to having that love rejected by others, as Jesus was rejected, in our homes, in our churches and especially by our enemies. But this trial of our faithfulness is part of our God given growing pains, so that we look to Christ and love with Him because we still need each other when the body is unwilling.

There are to be no lone strangers in the body of Christ. The Church is saved to share Communion with God in order to live in intimate fellowship with God as the people of God. Having a relationship with God is not just about us as individuals, we are one body of another who we love, Jesus Christ our Lord. We gathered together with the Lord to love others as He loves us.

To claim to be a Christian without binding oneself to a local Church and getting personally involved in the lives of the members is inconsistent with what God teaches us about the unity of God's communing people. To separate oneself in some sort of private religious endeavour is to be cut off from the significant others and the intimacy of life in Christ.

Privacy is about me, my and mine and it guarantees immaturity. This can only be seen as setting a different agenda to the Lord's commands, which results in excluding others from His loving presence as He is working in us for His good pleasure.

If there is to be any chance of real fellowship, it will only come when we can be encouraged to trust God enough to lower the barricades because we have seen that the significant others in our lives are there because He has chosen them for our good.

If we are still holding back, resisting the need to be vulnerable and transparent with the members of the Church, we are resisting the work of the Spirit of God and we quench the Spirit, we douse His fire in us so we grow cold towards His chosen people.

Walking by the Spirit is to live the communion life together in the presence of God. The children of God are eternally bound together by

divine love with chords that can never be broken, even when we are out of sight of each other. We are not called to live as if we are independent and isolated from the only body that gives life to the world. We are called to know the fullness of joy in intimacy with God and one another, because we are hidden together in God through Christ.

### **Private faith is not unified with love**

Private faith has not subjected itself in humility to the proper working of the body under the authority of the Spirit of God. Private faith may do some work for the church, but is not willingly subjecting itself to the body working on itself. Private faith has arrived at its own destination, half baked.

For each member of the body to grow in the likeness of Christ, there must be both the giving and receiving of the provisions of the Spirit which are allocated to every member. The Body life of the Church is co-dependent, it grows by mutually and transparently supporting one another in love under the leading of the Spirit. Members of the body of Christ who are devoted to the body will desire the willing contribution of all the other members.

Private faith takes no responsibility for mutual receiving the grace of God allocated to each member for the common good, and as a result we remain independent of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Private faith will prefer to talk about anything other than what God is doing in their lives.

Church is the body of Christ under the active dominion of the Holy Spirit. Failing to be mutually submissive and open to the body to carry out the purpose of God, is failing to be humbled before God, for the Spirit of God is personally active in the lives of all who have denied themselves to live for Christ.

“It seems odd, that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what he has revealed to others.” Charles Hadden Spurgeon

All believers are joined together in Christ at the head, through our hearts, and by the hip. So that we are living out His life as His chosen instrument in the Church. No one can have a private relationship with Christ without

also being united completely with His people in love. If we are one body in Christ as God's word declares, why are we so disconnected as a whole?

Loving one another cannot be restricted to just a few people of our choice if we are sincerely saved. Therefore, how can we honestly claim to be Bible believing Christians when we don't know what's happening with the lives of so many in our local congregation?

As one Pastor put it, “we spend years going to church to get our needs met – the service was for us, the sermon was for us, the music was for us, the pastor was for us, the fellowship was for us. We are looking for fellowship, and the motivation revolves around getting our needs met... And so, we really haven't changed at all. We're still consumed, absorbed, obsessed, and infatuated with what we need and frustrated by what we don't have.”

There is abundant evidence that we still live for self and not for Christ. The local church ought to be the place where we can find genuine fellowship in Christ. *“I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”* John 17:23

This fellowship of communion refers to our common union in the love of God. This communion we have is fellowship with God and those in Christ that fulfils the work of Christ in order for us to know and experience God now and forever.

John Owen wrote: “Believers have a duty of affectionate, sincere, genuine love in all things towards one another; a love compared to that of Christ for the Church.” ...“At present it is a grace that, shamefully, has been lost amongst those who call themselves Christians, to the dishonour of Christ and His Gospel.” John Owen 1616-1683

This communion of fellowship is based on the love of God. *“I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”* (John 17:26) A polite Hello and “how are you” is not what it's all about. Fellowship is about knowing God and sharing the love of God with His chosen children. How many people in the church know who you are as God's child?

True fellowship means that the teaching of God is always open to evaluation and application by God's people together, so that any blind spots in our understanding can be brought into the light. The individual is not naturally open to the scrutiny of others according to the written word of God. The one-hour church service we prefer is for many supposed to be the be all and end all of our fellowship, and this makes it easy for those who are misinformed to escape scrutiny.

If the Spirit of God is resident in each of us, conviction will provoke questions when we hear God's word, and the fellowship of Christians should be given time to see the truth. We do that together, because iron is for sharpening iron.

### **Private faith inhibits Evangelism**

We can't make disciples for Christ to be made in His image if Christ is not living through us personally to be like Him. We go on learning doctrine and don't understand that death of self is the only way to one life in Christ.

If Christ is in us His love would be the all-compelling power to pursue His passion for unity in the church for outreach in the world. Building up the body of Christ would be essentially part of life in the Spirit. Passion for carrying out the commands of God would be as natural as breathing.

As much as people resist the imperatives of 'one another' accountability as clearly explained to us in the Scriptures, is to the same degree that their faith is about themselves, and not about living for and serving the purpose of the whole body of Christ reaching the world. If evangelism is ever going to be a natural part of our daily life, this attitude of me-ness, that was not in Christ, needs to be eradicated from within the body of Christ and all those who claim His life.

"Me", wants to be part of the body of Christ for personal enjoyment, and at the same time stubbornly resists the spiritual input of other members of Christ who are chosen and gifted by God to build up each other with His life of service and self-forgetfulness.

For many private Christians, evangelism is a duty to be performed, not an inner compulsion from the love of Christ that is willing to die daily so others can live. Faith is not a private matter, it is the work of God

convicting sinners, which brings about repentance, so that an obedient relationship with God in Christ is possible in conjunction with His body the church.

Unless the 'me' of the natural man dies in us, we will not know the experience that Paul who wrote about: *'For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf.'* 2 Cor 5:14-15

Unless privatised faith is put to death by ourselves under the governance of the Spirit, we will not see evangelism as a natural part of living as we should do, always considering that we walk moment by moment in the presence of God. Until our desire evangelism for discipleship is as natural as breathing, becoming the primary task of the church; the responsibility of every member of the body to make disciples will be neglected.

*"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."* Matt 28:19

To fail to make disciples is to fail to obey the Lord Jesus. Jesus wasn't telling us to get people saved, He was telling us to make disciples who we would teach to be like Him as we have learnt to be like Him. For many, the lifestyle of a follower of Christ has been substituted for a religious program so self can be satisfied. If there is no compulsion of the Spirit to obey Christ by making disciples, it would appear that there is no obedience in relationship with Christ. We can't teach what we haven't learnt in our inner being.

Evangelism in discipleship is to be a daily experience that happens as naturally as eating when we walk by the Spirit. Evangelism is not a program, it is not an occasional duty to be performed, evangelism is an inner all compelling necessity, for without the compelling power of the Spirit we are dead; so dead that the love of Christ is not calling us to die to self so we can do what He commanded we do daily. True faith means we have died with Christ to live for Him.

*'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.'* Gal 2:20

The controlling “me” died with Christ. The Christ of God who is now our Lord and Saviour and lives in His people to fulfil His salvation plan, His way. *“I will put My Spirit within you and bring it about that you walk in My statutes, and are careful and follow My ordinances.”* (Ezek 36:27) *“the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”* Rom 8:4

Self-denial is central to obedience and life in the presence of Christ. *'And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”* (Luke 9:23) The cross is our assigned instrument of death, and we must choose to sacrifice ourselves. Rom 12:1-2

And the crucified believer lives for the good of others. *'Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility, consider one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross.'* Phil 2:3-8

The devoted believer is yoked to Christ and enslaved into His plan and purpose. *'The one who was called as free, is Christ's slave.'* 1 Cor 7:22

If we are in Christ, His Spirit is in us to will and to do for His good pleasure. *'Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body.'* 1 Cor 6:19-20

*'For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by*

*one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..... For the body is not one part, but many.* (1 Cor 12:12-14) Faith works the will of God. *'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.'* Eph 2:10

Faith demands dying to self in relation to the flesh of the natural man, and dying isn't easy, but possible with the enabling of the Spirit. This death to self is continually compelled in us by the love of Christ in order for us to love our neighbour and do good works in His name. Putting self to death is only possible when we follow the leading of the Spirit of God in humble obedience to live according to His will. *'For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons and daughters of God.'* Rom 8:14

Evangelism for discipleship is the natural outworking of the redeemed life of faith received from God. Scriptural knowledge without dying to self is what satan enjoys. If we have died with Christ, we will live for Christ. Therefore, making disciples demands we give our utmost in self-denial, as demonstrated by Christ. And making disciples deserves our complete diligence in following His example. It means putting to death all that pertains to self, and the things of the world, in order to love Him and live for Him. If we truly love Christ, we will find His love all compelling.

### **Where is Christ seen in our love for each other?**

*"Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant. It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own benefit; it is not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong suffered, it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; it keeps every confidence, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."*  
1 Cor 13:4-7

We are called for intimate communion on the vertical and horizontal plain.

*'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.'*  
John 17:3

*"That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."*  
John 17:21

Real intimacy comes from God by the Spirit to fill the heart of the inner man who has salvation in Christ. This intimacy does not just know about the Father and the Son, it's about knowing and being known personally in the depth of our being. In Christ we are an open book, a book that is open to the brethren.

This love of God is no private affair of natural man. This love from God is to be shared in common understanding with all the saints, so all the saints can share with each other the unsearchable love of God. This is the true intimacy our Father wants for all His children. God is working so we can know together our intimacy with Him and the Son, that we are one life together with God looking out for the good of others as we: *'Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.'* Gal 6:2

Because God is working to reveal Himself to us through Christ Jesus, it follows that each of us has as much of God as we want; we set the limit, not God. God has no limit as to the depth of intimacy that we can enjoy with Him and with each other. In the same way, each of us sets the limit as to how close we allow others who are in Christ to be intimate with us.

Those who have a greater desire for spiritual communion have more desire for God who is light to banish their darkness. Those who have no desire or little care for God because they love the world, live in the darkness. Limits of intimacy and the secrecy shielding the heart come from the realm of darkness. Those who are in the darkness resist coming to the light. Life in the dark is a private cave to be protected at all cost. The darkness is self-interested, self-determined and prideful, it is disobedient to God who calls us to be open to honest relationships with Him and others. Disobedience is entrenched in the darkness. The nature of the darkness is to hide its deception from being exposed to the outside world, so sometimes friendship is claimed but the reality produces no fruit to glorify God.

*“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”*

John 3:19-21

**Where to from here?**

Private faith is not true fellowship. The reason for the 51 'one another' imperatives in the New Testament is that the earthly family of God in the Church is naturally dysfunctional. All of us have come into the kingdom to some degree or another with a private faith that is unable to deal adequately with life in accordance with the godliness of the kingdom of God due to the extent that our minds are still corrupted by the flesh.

It doesn't matter how lovely our natural family life was, it was never like heaven. If it was a good life, we may not appreciate how much it falls short of the glory of God. If it was a bad life, we may seek that which was lost to us naturally and think we can have it all in the Church family, and often be disappointed because our sanctification together is a divine process of purification.

No one is excluded, all of us have to work out our salvation before God and each other. This is not only for our own sake but for the love of every member, a love which in turn builds up the health of our spiritual family. This is why 17 of the one another verses call on us to love one another sacrificially. The remaining 34 inform us how that love is to be worked out in our lives.

We are here to glory Christ by making and training disciples. The spiritual health of the body motivated by sacrificial love will have a big impact on the amount of fruit that is harvested and lasts for eternal life. Private faith doesn't sacrificially support the body of Christ in order to present everyone complete in the image of Christ.

Private faith deals with peripherals, the faith from God has its best results when it deals primarily with the heart. If we are not getting and giving heart massages we are only dealing with secondary issues, we need to be concerned with the engine room, where the power to do the work of God originates.

If we are not interested in what is going on in the hearts of our brethren, we will never know them well enough to help them do the work of God from the heart. *'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'*

Matt 22:37-39

The heart must be for God and for each other. Our cross can only be carried when the heart is wholly given to Christ, because we have to live in self-denial to love God and one another. "*Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*" Luke 14:27

If we are not concerned with the heart that motivates our actions, we will not be able to respond to the heart needs of our people. The people we belong to and should care for might as well keep their struggles to themselves because no one has the ears of love to listen and understand in order to share the burden and build up the heart in Christ. Private faith therefore inhibits evangelism that bears fruit for eternal life.

Our personal dysfunction is often hidden from us to protect our flesh from being exposed to the light in Christ until we are tested and convinced of our error by various trials under the hand of God. In this process of purification, we need all the help God has made available in the gifting of all our brothers and sisters in Christ. We not only work out our salvation with God, but we work it out with our divine family in Christ. In Christ we are made complete, so now we complete what we have been created for in Him. The rewards for faithfulness may not come in this earthly life. For we are being preparing together for life in heaven, and each of us will be rewarded for our sincere efforts to love one another as we make disciples on the way.

Changing Private faith into Body Life is a work of the Spirit of God that we must surrender into as we co-operate with Him through obedient faith. Loving one another is sacrificial and can only be done by walking in harmony with the Spirit's enabling.

Resistance to God's work in us is a cosmic battle. In order to prevent the Reign of Christ, the principalities and powers in the heavenly places want to preserve the private faith of the flesh. But the Spirit of God is with us so that we can put private faith to death, so that we can live the unifying faith that is in Christ as His life in the church and prove to be His disciples.

Self-protection is the natural way of the flesh, but when we look to Christ, we will see that self-sacrifice is the way of God. The way to eternal life is by dying to self and any idea of private faith in order to live for the communal life of Christ. The Christian life is the Christ life, and Jesus

shows us that this life of God in man is no private matter. *“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”* John 17:22-23

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”* John 13:34

Every church, regardless of how reformed it may be, and every Christian, regardless of how sanctified they have become, are to some degree or other, still unable to live the ideal expression of God's love because of the imprint of the sin that remains unsanctified to deny the reality of God's love in man. Regardless of anyone's assertions to know all that is required, no one knows all that needs to be known in order to love as God loves.

However, in spite of the stain of sin limiting the expression of God's love in us and others, we who live for Christ are resolutely compelled by His love to go on to be true to our calling to live according to His divine image imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. This is the grace of God made available to us in spite of the war of the world in sin.

This divine undertaking to love is possible through our commitment to personal sanctification and holiness. We need to realise that the fulfilment of the love of God in Christ will only be fully realised in us when the Lord returns and we all realise who we really are when we see Him face to face as we inherit His New Heaven and Earth.

For now, we have the promise sealed in us by the Spirit of God, then, we will have the manifestation of the glory of Christ who is the fulfilment of all the promises of God for us who have been chosen in Him. Until then, we don't dare deny the promise of God. But because of the weakness of the flesh we are sometimes shocked to discover the flesh of private faith in ourselves and others. God is our loving Father who is faithfully working all things together in heaven and earth for our good so that we are ultimately transformed into the image of Christ on His return. So, we shouldn't give the devil an opportunity to rob us again.

*for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

Rom 8:13-14,16-17

*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

Phil 2:12-13

While our life of faith is a personal experience, it is not for us alone. We are made new in Christ for each other. No greater love has a man (woman) than this, that he (she) lay down his (her) life for his (her) friends. While putting on Christ is a process, we sometimes tend to live as if we have already arrived. As much as we live for self as if we have arrived, we have a private faith that denies our unity in Christ with all who are His. We forget that we are all at best only half baked.

Being half baked doesn't absolve us from the need to lay down our life for the brethren, because if we are actually in Christ, His love should compel us to live for Him. Church is not only for our enjoyment of God's family love; Church is Christ, and He calls us to come and love with Him as we die for others by affectively taking up our cross to live with Him. Church is for us to actually know others and be known by others as Christ knows, so that we can bear one another's burdens in love. How many people in the Church do we know well enough to understand their pain and struggles in order to support their faith effectively?

Living for others takes heartfelt effort in forgetting ourselves in order to remember that the others belong to Christ who we believe lives in us, because we have died with Him and we have been raised up together with Him with eternal life.

When we get this right, we will get evangelism right. We will know what it means to lead others out of the darkness and into the light of the kingdom of God. All of our life is part of God's Providence for the good

of those He has chosen. All our pain, all our struggles, all our brethren. Our life is for His glory alone. All of us are for one another in Christ.

*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.* 1 Cori 13:1-3

*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.* Rom 11:34-36

*Who understands the power of Your anger And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.* Psalm 90:11-12

## Living Water Resources

### Come to the River

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