

### **PRESSING DEEPER INTO CHRIST**

We are now clear that the Holy Place represents the wilderness on one hand and the soul on the other. In ancient times the Israelites were originally in Egypt. Since it was in Egypt that they experienced the passover, Egypt was their outer court. After the passover they were brought out of Egypt into the wilderness. In other words, they proceeded from the outer court into the Holy Place.

While the Holy Place corresponds to the wilderness for the Israelites, it corresponds to the human soul for the Corinthian and Hebrew believers. For example, the believers in Corinth had experienced Christ as their Passover (1 Cor. 5:7) and then passed into the wilderness in their experience, where they enjoyed Christ as their manna and as their living water (10:1-5). They too were in the wilderness, like the Israelites of old, but the wilderness for the Corinthians was the soul. By reading 1 Corinthians carefully, we see that they were soulish and fleshly. Yes, they enjoyed Christ as their food and as their light and had many wonderful experiences of Christ, but their enjoyment of Christ was in their soul. Their flesh, the veil that separates the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place, had not been broken. Their soul had not been dealt with, so they were not in the spirit, which is the Holy of Holies. They enjoyed something of Christ, but not Christ Himself.

The Hebrew Christians also were typified by the Israelites in the wilderness (Heb. 3:6-8). The apostle Paul pointed out to the Hebrew Christians as well as to the Corinthians that the people of Israel were the illustration of their own condition. Chapter 4 of Hebrews indicates that to enter into the rest is to enter into the Holy of Holies and touch the throne of grace, where Christ our High Priest is today. The Hebrew Christians enjoyed something of Christ by the teachings. First Corinthians deals with the matter of gifts, whereas Hebrews deals with the matter of doctrines. The Corinthian believers were in the soul enjoying the gifts, and the Hebrew Christians were also in the soul enjoying doctrines; therefore, they could not understand the deeper things. Since both the Corinthians and Hebrews were addicted either to their gifts or to the elementary doctrines, they had to tolerate the wilderness in their souls.

This is why the apostle Paul entreated the Corinthian believers to know the spirit and be spiritual men instead of soulish men (1 Cor. 2:11-15). And in Hebrews 4:12 he said the same thing—that they must divide, or discern, the spirit from the soul. The principle in these two books is the same. Only these two books in the New Testament refer to the history of Israel in the wilderness. The reason for this is that the Corinthians were soulish in their gifts, and the Hebrews were soulish in their doctrines. Many Christians today are soulish in their gifts, and many others are soulish in their doctrines. Without a doubt, the doctrines helped the Hebrew Christians, and the gifts helped the Corinthians. But they were all in the soul, which is the Holy Place—not in the spirit, the Holy of Holies, where they could touch and experience Christ Himself. If we are going to make contact with Him in our spirit, we have to forsake our soul. We should not remain in the soul. If we remain in the soul, we are wandering in the wilderness.

You may say, “Why is it important? I still enjoy something of Christ. Why do you say that these doctrines are only elementary? By them I know something about Christ and enjoy something of Him. You say that these gifts are stressed too much. Why, then, do I still enjoy something of Christ by the gifts?” Look at the picture in the wilderness. For more than thirty-eight years, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, and day by day through all that time they partook of the manna. God is merciful. He is not a small God but an exceedingly generous God. Even when they were wrong, He still granted them something. But the manna, falling from the heavens daily, did not justify the wandering of the people of Israel in the wilderness. On the contrary, it proved how babyish and fleshly they were by enjoying nothing more than manna for thirty-eight years. Manna was all right for a short time, but they should have soon left it to enjoy the produce of Canaan.

The lesson for us is simply this: to have the gifts for a short time is permissible, but to insist on having the gifts all the time only proves that we are babyish. We must go on and even press on. The gifts are not our portion—Christ is the portion that God has allotted us. Before the apostle Paul dealt with the gifts in 1 Corinthians, he pointed out that Christ Himself is our portion. We are not called into the fellowship of gifts, but we are called into the fellowship of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). God did not make the gifts our wisdom, but He made Christ our wisdom. It is through Christ that we are justified and sanctified and redeemed (v. 30). We have to thank God for His gifts, but they are only a help for a short time. Israel surely could thank God for their daily manna, but the manna was only a temporary provision until they arrived in the good land. They should not have remained in the wilderness with the manna every day for thirty-eight years. Praise God for His wisdom and mercy, and thank God for His gifts, for when we are wandering in the wilderness, we do need the daily manna and gifts to help us. But this does not justify our continuing in such a course over an extended period of time. On the contrary, it may prove that we are still young and even babyish. If we would press on, there would be no further need for us to enjoy the manna; we could begin immediately to enjoy the produce of the good land of Canaan. When we enjoy the produce of the good land, it proves that we are in the rest and in the spirit. Otherwise, we are like Israel, remaining in the wilderness of our soul. If we are not in the spirit, the cross must deal with our flesh and our soul.

Hebrews 4, 5, and 6 exhort us to press on, and 1 Corinthians 9 exhorts us to run the race. We must press on to enter the spirit in order to touch Christ Himself and experience the deeper Christ as the hidden manna, the inner law, and the secret budding rod. The writer of 1 Corinthians advised the Corinthian believers to adjust and limit themselves in relation to the gifts. They needed to learn how to use the gifts in a proper way (ch. 14). If we read 1 Corinthians carefully and objectively, we will see that the intention of the writer is not to encourage but to adjust the believers in the practice of gifts. In order to run the race in a proper way, we must know the deeper things of Christ in the spirit.

Now we all have to check where we are. Are we at the altar or the laver? Perhaps we are even outside the main gate. Have we experienced these two items in the outer court and gone on to the bread, the light, and the sweet savor? Or have we passed through the Holy Place and now are in the Holy of Holies? If so, we are in the spirit, touching and experiencing Christ Himself in the deepest way. May the Lord be merciful to us so that we may know where we are.