

# 5

## We Don't Know What We Have

There are believers in whose lives football has taken the place of Christ. With others, it is money that has taken the place of Christ. They no longer come to church meetings regularly, so those of us who do come to the meetings look with sorrow upon them because they are no longer Christ-centered.

It is very bad when football takes the place of Christ, or money takes the place of Christ. But it is no less tragic when even good things take the place of Christ. The Bible, for instance, or church meetings.

Some people are accustomed to visiting their psychiatrist every week. They say they need that hour with him in order to survive. And for many of us, the church meeting is the same kind of pick-me-up.

Meetings can be wonderful. But my spiritual life is not grounded in meetings. It is grounded in Christ. As we sing in the hymn, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. All other ground is sinking sand."

We were considering Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, and we were seeing that his desire was that we might be strengthened with might in our inner man. Now our meetings can be a help in strengthening us in our inner man, or they can be the greatest single hindrance of all. It depends on whether we are meeting-centered or Christ-centered.

"But aren't we all Christ-centered?" someone asks.

When I hear some of the things that Christians say, I wonder if we really are Christ-centered. I frequently hear statements that cause me concern. For instance, especially among the Charismatics and Pentecostals I hear, "Brothers, since I came into this place I felt the presence of the Lord."

So I ask, "And where was the Lord before you came into this place?"

Actually, if we did not bring Him with us, He is not here. He is not in the habit of hanging from the ceiling and descending upon people each time there is a meeting. He does not dwell in buildings; He dwells in people.

Christ is not in Vatican City; nor is He in Dallas, Texas; nor in Springfield, Missouri. He doesn't live in places; He lives in the hearts of individuals. If He is in Vatican City, it is because He is in the heart of the Pope, not because He is in the building.

If Christ is at the meeting when you go there, it is because He is within you. You brought Him with you. So how can you say, "Oh, as soon as I get to the meeting I will feel the presence of the Lord"? That sounds nice, but it is heresy.

Don't confuse emotion with the presence of God.

When people tell me, "I feel the presence of God," I seriously question whether they have any real understanding of the new covenant. Those same people who "feel" the presence of God in meetings also say, "Lord, I am parched"—when they have rivers within them!

Sometimes people say to me, "Brother Ortiz, you are such a spiritual person. You must spend lots of time alone with the Lord. How much time do you spend alone with Him?"

I answer them, "When you leave me, then I will be alone with Him."

You see, I am with Him all day. He is in me, and I am one with Him; so I have no choice but to be with Him continually. When I am with other people, I am with Him; and when I am alone, I am with Him.

I would like to say to these people, "What do you mean

when you speak of my being alone with the Lord? Do you think I call Him and say, 'Listen, Lord, next week I will be alone from one until two each afternoon, so You can come and be with me'?"

Perhaps you think that in order to be alone with the Lord you have to go to a mountain somewhere. No, He is with you all the time. You are in relationship with Him, the closest relationship a person could possibly have. He is inside you!

I cannot say, "Listen, Christ, could you please leave us because I have to talk with this person?" He cannot leave me because we are one! He is my life, so how can we become separate even for a moment?

I engage in a continual dialogue with Him. If I have been talking with a person, as he leaves me, I say, "Lord, bless him." It is not a religion, it is a relationship.

Many of us are dying of thirst in the midst of the Amazon river! We have rivers of living water within us, ready to gush out like a torrent, but we don't know it, so we feel thirsty.

*You remember the eldest son of the prodigal son's father. When the prodigal came back, the father made a feast. They had a great party, and they killed the fatted calf. The elder brother heard the sound of music and dancing, and he felt left out. When he learned that his brother had returned and there was great feasting, he got mad.*

*The father came out to see him and said to him, "Come in and join in the party."*

*"No, no," he said. "I have been with you continually, but you never so much as gave me a little goat to feast on with my friends. And now this rascal comes, and you kill the fatted calf."*

*The father answered, "Look, you have always been with me and all my things are yours." In other words he was saying to him, "If you didn 't kill a goat to have a feast, it is because you are a fool."*

He was complaining, yet he had everything he could have wished for. To release the rivers of water that we have within, we simply need to act as if what God says is true.

I like to use illustrations because they give us a clearer picture than theological definitions. One time I asked one of my deacons to help me illustrate the new covenant.

I said to him in the vestry, "Halfway through my sermon I am going to ask you for all your money. I am giving you my wallet, filled with money, but no one will know that it is my wallet. When I say to you, 'Brother Smith, give me all the money you have—hand your wallet over to me. I won't return it to you'—I want you to give it to me."

He rushed up and gave it to me. Everyone was amazed.

I showed them how much money there was in the wallet and they said, "It can't be, it can't be!" They wondered what they would have done if I had asked them!

"Thank you," I said, and I put my wallet in my pocket.

The building was full of surprised faces, but the deacon and I knew the secret. Of course, the money was mine. And if he had not given it to me, I could have called the police!

When God asks you to do something, it is because He first has given you the power to do it. So when He asks you to love and you don't, He can call the police! He has given you the ability to love because Christ is in you. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," said Paul.

We have to learn, not how to get more from God, but how to release all that we have. "The love of God is spread abroad," says Paul. Where? "In our hearts." So all the love we need is there.

Don't say, "Lord, give me more love so that I can love my brother."

If you don't love your brother, it isn't because you don't have enough love. All the love you need is within you. You don't need more love. You need to know how to release the flow of love that is within.

God never commands us to do something we cannot do. He never will ask you to do something He has not given you the ability to do. This is His promise under the new covenant. "I will *cause* you to walk in My ways."

You recall the incident when Peter and John were going to the temple and they saw a lame man laid at the gate Beautiful.

They didn't point to the man and tell him, "You need to come to our campaign so that we can teach you four steps to healing. If you will learn them and believe them, you can be healed."

No, they said, "What we have, we give."

Once I invited an evangelist to preach in my church. At the close of the service he said, "If you don't have faith, don't come to the throne."

I said to him, "Look, if we had faith, we wouldn't have needed to invite you here. We wanted to hear you because we believe you have more faith than us."

Peter and John didn't ask the man to do something. They conferred upon him what they already had. It was just the rivers of water flowing spontaneously out of them. They *knew* what they had. The problem is, we don't know what we have.

We say, "Oh, please heal someone, Lord!"

Then we turn to the individual and we say, "Now, move your leg."

We should say, "What we have, we give."

I am not trying to ridicule what we do. Let's keep on doing it if it helps people in the meantime. Praise the Lord for what He already has given us. But I am waiting for more, for the full operation of the new covenant, the unlimited outpouring of Christ in us. And I believe we are discovering how it can happen.

What does it mean to live in the Spirit?

To live in the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit is to be continually conscious of the presence of Christ in you. That's all it is!

"What? That's too simple!"

Many books have been written about walking in the Spirit.

Some of them are very good. But most of those books deal with all of the things we need to unlearn, not what we need to learn in order to live in the Spirit. They are directed at Christians who are in error.

What about the new convert? Does he need to read all of Watchman Nee's books in order to be able to live in the Spirit? If he does, then life in the Spirit becomes something difficult because only a certain kind of people can read all of those books.

Life in the Spirit should be the easiest thing you can imagine. The things of the kingdom of God are easy, simple. That is why Jesus said that in order to understand the life of the kingdom we have to forget how intelligent we are and become like children.

Today, especially, we are intelligent people because we have a great deal of education. I believe that there are many things concerning the Gospel that we do not understand—not because they are difficult, but because they are too easy and don't appeal to us.

One of the leaders in our church is an economist. He is a doctor of economic science and professor of mathematics at the university.

While I was preaching one morning I asked, "How much is two plus two?"

At first he smiled at me, because the answer was obvious. But I didn't smile back. I kept a very serious, puzzled look on my face. So he, too, became serious. He began to do all the equations he could think of with the number two.

I stayed silent, and the whole congregation became intent. After a little while he said, "I don't know, pastor."

I said, "Thank you."

There was a little child in the next row. So I said to the child, "How much is two plus two?"

"Four." The answer came right back without delay.

You see, it was too easy for the doctor of economic science. He could not believe that I could ask him such a sim-

pie question as how much is two plus two. And because it was so easy he began to look for something more complicated in my question.

Jesus said, "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." If we understand what He meant—that life in the kingdom of God is a very simple thing—we have discovered the key to living in continual joy and peace.

The things of the Lord have to be very simple if they are for the poor and uneducated. If they are not simple, they may be meant for some theologian in England or Germany, but they are not for me.

To walk in the Spirit is more simple than you can imagine.

You don't need to read any books. Even this one. Actually, the more you read, the more confused you will become until you really understand the simplicity of the Gospel. That is why I never give books to new converts.

We need to have the eyes of our hearts opened to see that because Christ is in us, we have all that is needful for walking in the Spirit. If we once can see that He in us is everything, and that we are joined as one with Him so that we are continually in His presence, life becomes very easy.

Suppose that you are a sister in my church and I see you at the corner of the street. I say to myself, "Oh, I am going to say hello to that sister."

So I run after you to try to catch you. But you don't know that it is I, so you keep on walking. And when you realize that someone is coming after you, you start to walk quicker and quicker. Then you run. So I run.

After three blocks, as I am out of breath, I shout, "Sister, it's I...Johnny Ortiz!"

"Oh, Brother Ortiz, what a blessing to see you. Alleluia!" you tell me.

"But listen, I've been trying to catch you for three blocks," I explain, "but you were not conscious that it was I."

Sometimes we do this with Jesus. We treat Him as though He were not here.

You see, we can be talking about Jesus, but in our consciousness we can be far from Him. For instance, when we sing words like, "Come into my heart Lord Jesus," and He is already there.

Do you remember the two disciples who were walking to Emmaus? They were talking about Jesus. And as they did so, He caught up with them and started to join in their conversation. They were talking about Him, but they were completely unconscious of the fact that He was there with them.

*"What are you talking about?" He asked.*

*"You mean you don't know?" they responded in amazement. "Everybody is talking about Jesus Christ. How come they all know but you. Are you a stranger who has just arrived in the city? Don't you even know who He was?"*

Even as He began to expound the Scriptures to them concerning Himself, they continued to be unconscious of His presence.

Norway produces the cheapest electricity in the world, so they never think of turning lights off. They keep them on day and night. Their electricity is generated by the many rivers and falls in their country.

The Vikings lived in the same country centuries ago, but they used candles. They didn't use the power that they had available because they were unconscious of its potential.

Paul prayed that we might experience all of the fullness of God according to the power which works *within* us. But we sing, "Come and quench my thirsty soul \_\_\_\_" How silly. We are asking for something we already have, all because of a lack of consciousness.

I would like to take hold of God's people and shake them. We need to see how stupid we have been. Somehow we have to change this situation, because the world is waiting for us to wake up, so that we can share with them not a doctrine but a life!

Christ is in us all day long. But we think that He is only in

our meetings. So we go to the meetings to feel His presence.

We act as if He were in the ceiling of the church building. When we come in, we imagine that we can pull Him down by our singing. So after we sing two or three of those "nice" songs, He comes down and blesses us—then He goes up again until next Sunday when we return to feel the presence again.

There are people who go from one "nice" meeting to another to experience the presence. But these people are not living by faith; because Paul said that we are to experience Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, so that we are continually conscious of His presence.

There is a great deal of confusion about what the presence of God is. If the choir sings nicely, the organ plays beautifully, the pianist excels, and the pastor sounds inspired, we say, "Oh, what a sense of God's presence there was today!"

But if the choir lost the tune because the organist didn't come, and the pastor forgot his notes, we say, "Oh, the service really lacked God's presence today."

No. All that we were missing was the presence of the organist, not the presence of God. God's presence has nothing to do with the choir, the organist, the pianist or the pastor. We have Christ's presence within us whether the organist comes or not. It doesn't depend on whether the choir sings nicely or not.

"There's a river of life flowing out from me," we sing. Where does the river come from? Not from the beautiful singing or the atmosphere of the service, but from inside us. We don't need external things in order for the river to flow.

The author of the book of Hebrews says that all of these external things are going to be shaken, and only the unshakable will remain.

So be careful if you depend on these things for a sense of God's presence. Because those things could be shaken and we could lose the organ and the choir, the building, the pastor and everything else. But Christ always remains.

Don't lean on the shakeable things, lean on the unmovable

kingdom of God which reigns in your heart because Christ lives there. All the other things are just like icing or ornaments.

Thank the Lord for these luxuries that we have—the singing groups, the buildings, the organs and pianos. Thank the Lord that we have the luxury of talented people to come and sing to us. But those things may one day end. The many great ministries, and even your pastor, may cease to function. But Christ in you still will be there.

Did you ever notice that Paul had the same attitude whether he was in the pulpit or in jail?

He could have enjoyed the organ, the piano, the two flags—or jail and stocks. It was all the same to him. He could sing in both places, even when he had 39 lashes on his back.

Why was Paul able to do that?

He spoke of, "The God whom I serve in my spirit." It was not the atmosphere, the building, the organ, the candles that constituted worship for Paul. He worshipped in his spirit, without all of these things. And we, too, need to get used to being without those things so that we can focus our attention on Christ alone, the King who reigns within our spirit.

To walk in the Spirit is to be continually conscious of His presence.

Suppose I were to come and visit you tomorrow. I knock on the door, but nobody opens it. I listen, and I hear noises inside.

"Somebody is in here," I say to myself, "and they don't want to open the door."

I really bang hard on the door, but there is no response.

So I open the door and walk in. And you are there.

"Hello, how are you?"

You don't answer. Instead, you go to the kitchen. So I follow you there.

"I came to visit you," I explain.

You ignore me and begin to peel your potatoes. When you have done that, you go into another room and begin cleaning it.

Again I follow you. You go to the supermarket, and still I

follow after you. You go to the bank, and I also go there with you. But you don't pay any attention to me.

All day I follow you, but you don't even talk to me.

The next day, I come to your house again. I follow you the whole day, and still you ignore me. You act as if you were completely unconscious of my presence.

On Sunday, you come to the services and you see me there. "Oh, Brother Ortiz, how are you? I'm so pleased to see you!"

You act as if you hadn't seen me for a long time.

"What's wrong?" I ask. "I've been with you the whole week!"

That's what we do with Jesus. He is with us all week, but we wait until Sunday to feel His presence. We treat Him as if He weren't with us the whole time. And I have to tell you that this kind of religion is heresy. It is the complete opposite of what the new covenant is all about.

When Jesus comes to church, it is not just to be there for an hour or so on Sunday. It is to enjoy a continual communion with us, every day of the week. When He comes, He never leaves us. We are in church with Him all the time, 24 hours a day.

It is time we became conscious of His presence.