

# Alone With God

***'You will be like a spring whose waters  
never fail.'***

(Isaiah 58:11)

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To You

***‘Jesus said, ‘I am with you always.’***  
(Matthew 28:20)

1.

Jesus Christ comes to you by his Spirit, and you are never alone again. You will only ever be '*alone with God*'. Never alone.

Let me begin by sharing my story of finding God, of being found by God.

I was raised in a Christian home. My parents taught me about Jesus – '*God with us*'<sup>1</sup> – and I believed, I received. I was very young, maybe 4 years old. I grew up in public schools, primarily in Ireland. I soon realized that to believe in Jesus, to follow him, was not an easy road. By the time I was a teenager there were things I wanted to do, to think, to say, that conflicted with my faith in Jesus. I chose the way of the world. I chose to fit in, go with the flow, be one of the crowd – swearing, smoking, partying. By the age of sixteen, I was deep in. It doesn't take long to sink deep in. All my ties with my 'friends' were with ropes of folly and immorality. This wasn't their fault, really,

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 1:23

but mine. People are deeper than that, but I chose to connect with people on the lowest of terms. If I didn't set the terms, I agreed to them. Honestly, I usually set them.

It was here God met me. Let me explain. I was away from home for a summer. My father had taken me with him on a mission trip. He was on mission; I was on the trip. We were up in Finland at this point, at a youth camp. One evening when I found myself sitting alone in the meeting hall, I felt these words. I 'felt' them from the Holy Spirit. He spoke to my heart, my mind, and said:

***'You know I am true, but you live like I am not true.'***

I was immediately cut to the heart. This one line exposed myself to me. I was false. I had a deep knowledge that Jesus was true, and that his words are true. But I was living with my back to him. I was living like I did not know he was alive, true, present, God. I was laid bare – to myself. I sat alone and cried. These were not tears of joy, or even, really, regret.

They were tears of awareness: I knew where I was, and where I was supposed to be, and I could see the hard road ahead.

Now, this hard road was not one of trying to please God, or do good things. It was simply the true road of repentance that would walk me out of this valley of sin. God keeps things real. He is merciful, but he values repentance – a true turning away from our sin in the depths of our heart, and in our relationships with people. A true change of direction. This was going to cost me, and cut me, and leave me lonely for a while.

And it was in this season – breaking up with my girlfriend and all my friends, apologizing to people, staying home, sitting alone at school, being honest, being silent – it was in this season of deep aloneness, that I experienced the truth, the power, of being *'alone with God'*.

I would get up early to read my Bible and pray before school. After school, I would get home, make a cup of tea, go to my

room, put on my lamp, and read my Bible and whisper to Jesus. Jesus was the only person in my life at this time. I had family, but really no one knew what I was going through, what I had given up, lost, in my life outside of home. I felt so alone – even estranged from myself. Like, I felt I had lost my own personality. I didn't know who I was anymore. I was alone. I was lonely. But then, there, I realized, I was not alone. I was alone with God. Jesus, by his Holy Spirit, was with me. He was the sweetness in this bitterness. He was the peace in this place. He was a true friend in my heart, in my room, in my mind.<sup>2</sup>

***‘Jesus said, ‘I don’t call you a servant, I call you my friend.’ (John 15:15)***

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<sup>2</sup> If you have not yet taken this step through the ‘door’ of Jesus Christ, and want to know more, please visit the ‘FIRST STEPS’ tab at: [www.1peter1three.weebly.com](http://www.1peter1three.weebly.com)

2.

Being alone is not the same as being lonely. I've been in crowds before where there was danger in the air, and I wanted nothing more than to be alone. I wanted to get away from people to some safe, hidden place, and be alone. Being alone, in this case, is the opposite of being lonely. It is being safe and feeling comforted.

Jesus referred to himself as a 'door' – a door of escape. He tells us that when we pass through this door, which is himself, we enter into a new space, a new world, a new reality.

***'Jesus said, 'I am the door, and anyone who comes through me will be saved. They will go in and come out and find pasture.'*** (John 10:9)

The hiding place that Jesus gives us is different to ones we find, or make, in life. We tend to hide away from people, where no one knows... But Jesus himself 'hides' us, and hides with us.

***‘The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.’*** (Proverbs 18:10)

The ‘righteous’, by the way, are those who run to the Lord. They are not people who are ‘good’, but people who run to the Lord because he is good.

Here is another beautiful picture of the hiding place *in* Christ – which is yours:

***‘He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge.’*** (Psalm 91:4)

Sometimes I close my eyes and let the sounds of life around me carry God’s presence to me. Jesus said his words were ***‘spirit and life’***.<sup>3</sup> Through faith, through quietness, we can sit in his Spirit, and know his presence with us. Never alone. Christ always with you, and in you.

***‘Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.’*** (Psalm 42:7)

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<sup>3</sup> John 6:63



### 3.

It can be hard to feel 'special'. I think one of the most empty things is when a man says to a group or a crowd, *'I love you all!'* From rock concerts to church services, this statement from one mortal to a group of other mortals, just rings so hollow to me. I mean, you don't even know my name, or my life, and yet you 'love' me? *(Forgive me if I'm coming over cynical here, or judgmental!)*

Now, my friend, it is different when it comes to God's Word, and you. In the Scriptures God speaks at times to *all* people, but he is speaking to each individual, not to a crowd. He *does* know your name, and he does know your heart and your life story. He knows the worst of you, the best of you.

So when God says that he loves all people the same – no favoritism<sup>4</sup> – this truly includes you. You are loved by God in a special way. This Scripture, for example, is truly about you:

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 2:11; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4; Matthew 18:14

***'God created my inmost being; he knit me together in my mother's womb. I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'***

(Psalm 139:14)

And this is God's Word to you:

***'I am going to allure you; I will lead you out... and speak tenderly to you.'***

(Hosea 2:14)

And this:

***'I have called you by name.'***

(Isaiah 43:1)

And this:

***'I have loved you with an everlasting love.'*** (Jeremiah 31:3)

These truths of God are not being spoken by some rock star or church pastor.

These words are from a holy and true God, spoken to all people who will receive and believe. By faith in Jesus you receive his words about you personally:

***'To all who did receive Jesus, to those***

***who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.'***

(John 1:12)

So, my friend, faith is how I truly accept God's words in Scripture about me personally. Without faith I cannot do this. With faith, with sincere and humble belief, I can allow God's word to all people, to fall on my soul personally.

***'Without faith it is impossible to please God. Everyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.'*** (Hebrews 11:6)

4.

I have regrets.

One thing I feel deeply is when I have failed to '*stand with*' someone, or be there for them.

I remember once when I was a teen and cycling home from school with a friend, that we suddenly realized we were being followed by two older guys on bikes. And sure enough, when we turned to go through a park, they picked up speed and came after us. We took off fast, and I got ahead, but I turned and looked and saw they had caught my friend, and were stopped on the path a ways back. I didn't stop. I pressed on even faster all the way home. My fear had obliterated my courage, my loyalty, my character – in an instant. When I got home I felt so bad. I called my friend, and he was gracious, really chill about it. He said they were asking for money, and a bit threatening, but nothing really happened. I was so relieved. But the scar of my own cowardice marked me.

There have been other times I 'denied' friendship with people, when put on the spot, and the popular view was to 'not like' that person. I have literally said, '*don't like that guy, either*'.

I have lots of examples of this in my life. Lots! And I have the full suite of 'regrets', involving other sins – things I've done to people, things I've said to and about people, cheating, lying, lust, stealing, hating, gossiping, hypocrisy, greed, ego, pride, deceit...

I say these things not to wallow, but to be real. God doesn't call us to wallow in our regrets, but he does call us to own our sin, and then turn from it. He calls us to do what we can to take his path in life, in Christ, to walk away from sinful living.

Let me share one of my deepest goals in this life, and the next. It is this:

To see people I have hurt, I have let down, I have 'denied', walk through the gates of heaven into complete healing.

I have a personal goal in other people's

salvation – that they will forget the pain I caused them; that they will be free of me.

We are told that in heaven there is a river flowing through the city, crystal clear, and along the banks of that river there are trees with leaves *'for the healing of the nations.'*

I long for the day I see those I have hurt, I have scarred, coming through the gates of heaven, and seeing the spray of these waters, the mist of the Holy Spirit, the light of God's face, overcoming them with complete and eternal healing. I long to finally connect with these people in complete healing, where my own sins bear no mark on their minds, in their eyes, on their souls. Complete restoration. Complete joy. True and holy togetherness. There we will laugh and walk through the city streets together.

5.

You know enough already. Enough to be close to God, and do God's will.

Most people in the Bible did not know very much about the Bible, if you know what I mean. Some of the great prophets and disciples of Jesus, did not know many Bible verses. And some of the 'heroes of faith' that Jesus pointed to, spoke of, did not know even one verse – like Rahab.<sup>5</sup>

I recently read the true story of 'Mimosa', by Amy Carmichael. This tells about a little girl who heard only one true line about God – '*God is your Father*' – and she built a life of faith and testimony on this. It was not for another 30 years that Mimosa had a chance to hear any more Scripture, or read for herself.<sup>6</sup>

What God values is not how much we know about him, but what we believe about him. We can know chapters by

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<sup>5</sup> Joshua 2; Hebrews 11:31

<sup>6</sup> 'Mimosa', Amy Carmichael, 1958

heart, but not have a heart of faith. Jesus once challenged the religious leaders about this directly. He said:

***‘You study the Scriptures because in them you think you possess eternal life. But you refuse to come to me, and actually have life.’*** (John 5:39-40)

Jesus also reminded us that we needed to *‘become like children’* or we *‘could not inherit the Kingdom of God.’* (Matthew 18:3)

Children don’t know much, but they believe, and they love and trust. This is what God uses.

I know far more than I need to know about God, about his teachings, about about about... But which of these truths of God actually soak in my spirit and flow through my life? Which truths do I know, but do not live?

I need more faith, not more knowledge.

Now here’s another angle on this. You can come to know *too* much. All that



'wisdom' starts to stockpile and clog the arteries, block the flow of Spirit, the outlet of love.

***'We all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.'***

(1 Corinthians 8:1)

King Solomon wrote:

***'With the increase of knowledge is the increase of sorrow.'***

(Ecclesiastes 1:18)

A few years ago I wanted to go to seminary to the study the Bible, to get a degree in it. Why? Well, honestly, not because I thought I needed more 'knowledge' to do the will of God in my life, but because I thought it would gain me more personal respect. The Lord convicted me of my pride, and I did not go.

You see, the real challenge in my life is not how much I know about God or the Bible; it is how much I love God and love my neighbor. The challenge as a believer in Jesus is not trivia about him, but

following him *'in secret'*, in integrity, in quiet boldness.<sup>7</sup> Standing *with* Christ and with the lowly, not posting *about* him, is usually the call and challenge of God.

Writing a book is not a spiritual challenge for me. Speaking up for what is right when my colleagues are speaking about – or looking at – what is wrong, is a challenge for me. And in these moments, I don't need to recall any verses or books or Bible studies; but rather I know what is true, and I need to stand with Christ. This, my friends, is the deep stuff, and we need very little knowledge to walk in this.

Too much knowledge. Jesus challenged the leaders of his day, saying that the knowledge they had was not *paired* with the power of God.

***'Jesus said, 'You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures together with the power of God.'***

(Matthew 22:29)

You see, the words of Christ only have

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 6:4,6; Luke 12:4-5,8-9

power if they are paired with faith in Christ, in you, in me. If they are not 'believed' and received in the right spirit, they are not alive in you, in me. For this reason even the devil could quote the Scriptures to Jesus. Why? Because Scriptures are not magical. Words can be twisted. People have quoted you, but really they have misquoted you. They said the right words, but they twisted your spirit, your intention, the right moment to speak such words. One Spirit-filled word, paired with the faith of a child, can change a nation.

The apostle Paul spoke of his knowing of Scripture versus his knowing of Christ personally, and here is what he said:

***'If someone thinks they have reasons to put confidence in their religious upbringing and training... I have more! I'm from the people of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, I am a Hebrew of Hebrews. Regarding the Bible laws, I was a leader in the community; regarding zeal, I even persecuted people that I thought were wrong. But whatever were gains to me, I now***

***consider loss for the sake of Christ. I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not being 'righteous' by the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.'***  
(Philippians 3:4-9)

By all means read and study the Word, but in order to *know* God, not know *about* God. Ask the Lord to give you faith to believe what you read, to walk by his Spirit, to live what you know, to love those around you. If we are living what we study, we probably don't need to study as much.

***'Without faith it is impossible to please God.'*** (Hebrews 11:6)

And listen, I end this section with this: You already know enough to change a person, heal a person, save a person. You know that Jesus is the Lord. You know that Jesus loves them. You know that Jesus died with our sin, and rose again, and offers us forgiveness of sin and life forever. You know that Jesus is a

friend to people. You know Jesus is with us by his Spirit, and he hears every prayer we pray, and knows every worry of our heart. You know all this truth, and by the Spirit of God can share this with another, and lead them to Jesus. You know by heart all of God's most important truths!<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Romans 1:16

6.

Faith is about changing things. Faith is about changing people.

When we talk about having faith, it's not – it should not be – about believing that everything is just going to work out somehow, or that despite things being hard, we will stand strong. Of course, it is good to believe in the Lord despite the darkness, but faith is more than this. Faith is about believing light *into* the darkness. Changing the darkness.

I had an encouraging experience of this recently. In work I had felt a spiritual opposition to my faith in Jesus by one particular co-worker. Jesus in me, his Spirit, my values, these things I could feel had hit a wall with her, had triggered a type of hardness, a coldness.

At first I found myself praying, believing, for just strength in myself, courage, protection. All good. All true.

But then I felt to pray the blood of Jesus over my relationship with this person. My

prayers changed from *enduring* as a follower, to *advancing* the Kingdom in this woman's life, and in my relationship with her and the workplace. I began to pray the 'overcoming' blood of Christ over her, over me, and over our connection. I prayed for breakthrough, for the breaking of this stronghold, and for favor with her – that the Lord would soften her heart towards his Spirit, and towards his Spirit in me.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after this new focus and strategy in prayer, we crossed each other in the hall, and she simply touched my arm in passing, to say 'Hi'. No smile, just a greeting and light touch. I felt there was something in this. I didn't know exactly what, but I felt the connect – even the touch – was something spiritual, almost unintentional.

Then just yesterday I was on a conference call with this co-worker and others. She saw me wearing a t-shirt based on a TV show, and she loved it! She said, '*I need that shirt!*' Immediately I

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<sup>9</sup> Revelation 12:10-11, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

said, *'It's yours! Soon I'll leave it on your desk!'* She was grateful, truly! She accepted and said the t-shirt would fit her husband and he would love it!

Spiritually I have felt a breakthrough with her. I know it is the Lord. He increased my faith, not to just endure certain winds, but to face them, to still them, in Jesus' name.

And often I think of two verses that speak to giving gifts as a way to advance a spiritual cause. The first is from Jesus himself:

***'Use money to buy friends, so that when it is gone, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings.'***  
(Luke 16:9)

Another is in Proverbs:

***'A gift opens the way for the giver, and ushers him into the presence of the great.'*** (Proverbs 18:16)

There is a time to ask God for faith to stand strong in cross winds. But there is



also a time to ask God for faith to pray 'into' people's lives, into a workplace, into a person's health, relationships, finances.

The most effective thing we can do as believers in Jesus, is to have deep faith. Because with faith in God, deep and sincere, we can ask, believe and see change happen. We can truly stand and pray with people, and see doors open and close in their lives.

***'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'*** (Matthew 16:19)

7.

This matters. This doesn't matter.

One person says that something is really important, but to you it isn't. To you it's not important. They might have to, but you don't have to. It doesn't mean that to you; this doesn't matter.

One person says that something really is *not* important, but it is to you. To you it is very important. They might believe they don't have to, but you do; you believe you must, and that they should also. It means something different to you, and it does matter.

One person believes something is at a point where everything now needs to change. You don't think so. You believe that point has not yet been reached, that line not crossed.

Another believes a line has not been crossed, that this or that does not really mean anything. You believe the true meaning, the moment of change and distance, has come. What has gone down

is not just as it seems, but means something, matters now.

Jesus said, '**Blessed are your eyes because they see.**' He also said that the eyes are the lamp of the body, and that good eyes mean true light in the body, in a person's 'seeing' and their path. The Bible states that God's Word is a '**light to the path.**' So we can think something does matter, when it truly doesn't, or doesn't when it truly does. We can only see through our own eyes, but our eyes might not be clear.

What informs my seeing? What light is on my eyes, and from my eyes? What teaching and Spirit inform my judgments on what matters, and when it's time? What path of life am I walking so as to recognize deviation? What priorities are in my sights, so as to recognize distraction? What Spirit guide speaks to me – me personally? Am I immersed? Am I 'practiced' in discernment?

In love, in peace, I simply told her, '*I don't agree. I don't think this does matter.*'

***‘The mature... have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.’***

(Hebrews 5:14)

***‘God’s Word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path.’***

(Psalm 119:105)

***‘The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light.’***

(Matthew 6:22-23)

***‘Blessed are your eyes for they see.’***

(Matthew 13:16)

***‘The Lord will guide you always...’***

(Isaiah 58:11)

***‘When you turn to the left or to the right, you will hear a voice behind you say, ‘This is the way, walk in it.’***

(Isaiah 30:21)

8.

The Bible is not hard. It is deep and rich, but not hard to understand.

Today I was reading from chapter two in Ephesians. The sentences were long and full. I stopped and considered.

Paul isn't really writing 'much' here, he's just drilling down on a simple, important point. He's hammering it home. He really wants people to see and know the main thing.

And this is the case with the whole Bible. People get too close to the print, and then they can't see the wood for the trees, or the Spirit for the words. Stand back. Consider. Christ – who said we needed to be like children<sup>10</sup> – is trying to free us, not tie us up in this passage. God – who loves all men the same – is trying to speak to all men, not just the scholar.

So what is the 'big' point in this passage? What is thing that the writer is trying to

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 18:3,14

say? If you had to boil it down, or summarize it in one line, what's the *key* teaching here? It is usually in just one or two of the lines, spelt out clearly. Find that line.

***'They read from the Scriptures clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.'***  
(Nehemiah 8:8)

9.

The masses versus the individual.

I was in a plane, coming to land in Chicago, USA. The descent was slow and long, and it gave me time to see the hundreds of thousands of lights – homes and cars and buildings – representing hundreds of thousands of people. Every person made in the image of God. Every person with a unique story, life experience, and spiritual journey with God. I was overwhelmed, honestly, as I pondered the ‘mission’ of God to reach the whole world with the ‘gospel of peace.’ I was overwhelmed by the masses.

As I gazed out the window, I noticed the lady next to me was clinging to her seat every time the plane shook a little. The turbulence made her anxious. I felt the Lord prompt me to break the ice with her. I leaned over and gently said, *‘Does flying make you a little nervous?’* She smiled, and said it did, so she would work on some breathing technique and visualization to help herself. I began to

ask her a little about herself, if she was heading out on a trip, or heading home... I was making conversation to distract her. We only had about thirty minutes left of the flight, so I thought a little distraction might help her. She seemed to welcome it.

She shared about being recently retired, and trying to work some travel in. She mentioned in passing that in the last year she had lost some friends, and it made her think that she needed to get out and discover life a little, not just sit at home.

I felt another prompting from the Lord to go ahead and offer her a little verse card that I always carry and share with people, as opportunity arises. On the back of the verse card – same size as a business card – is also an invitation to learn more about life in Jesus on my website. I share this as the Spirit leads.

So I leaned over and said, *‘Peggy, can I share this verse card with you? I like to share these couple of verses with people when I can.’*



She said yes, of course, and took the card, glanced at it, and put it in her bag for later. This is exactly what I was hoping for, praying for – a seed sown.

I looked out the window, and the city looked different to me now. I had just been given an opportunity to love, care for, and gently testify to, *one* person. And suddenly I felt like I had reached the whole city in Jesus' name.

Sometimes we feel like we reach many individuals through a mass campaign, but we have not; we communicated with many, but reached none. Other times we feel like we have reached only one person of many, but we haven't; rather we have set forth testimony in Spirit across many hearts and souls, even in the heavenly realm. With Christ it is never about numbers. The good shepherd left the ninety-nine to find just one.

The whole world is in his hands, and if he calls you to one, through that one you reach his world. That's why one soul in one city, changes the look of that city. It is a city reached – and being reached.

That's its new look. Praise the Lord!

***'Jesus said, 'On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.'***

(Matthew 16:18)

***'Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end...'***

(Isaiah 9:7)

10.

You do advance God's Kingdom.

Christ's light is in you. His Spirit is in you. You believed, and his light poured into you.<sup>11</sup>

***'Jesus said, 'You are the light of the world.'*** (Matthew 5:14)

I have experienced, and I'm sure you have too, the impact of God's light in you, of Jesus in you. Nothing you said, nothing you did, just his Spirit in you, in a worldly situation.

I've had people react trustingly because they 'sense' something in me. They don't say this, but they do this. I've had other people that are dark in spirit, sense Christ in me, and react coldly to me, in opposition spiritually. Nothing said, nothing done, but a type of standoff.

Jesus said that in him ***'true light'*** had come into the world, but people ***'loved'***

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:19; Ephesians 1:13

***the darkness.***<sup>12</sup>

This 'true light' of Christ is in your soul. True light is everywhere you go, everywhere you set your feet.

Now, when we embrace this identity, when we lay claim to the Light of Jesus in our souls, our spirits, the power of our presence increases, the power of the Light in us increases. Faith puts power behind our identity, and puts power behind the 'advance of the Kingdom' through us.

***'We live by faith, not by sight.'***

(2 Corinthians 5:7)

Faith is in the depths of our being. Yes, it comes forth in action and lifestyle and obedience to Jesus, and love of God, but it resides deep within. And it is the source of our spiritual power in Christ. It is more important than anything we will actually *do*, so to speak. It is the heart of our relationship with Christ, and his light in us.

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<sup>12</sup> John 1:9, 3:19

With a deep, sincere faith, wherever you are, Light is, and darkness is pushed back. No words spoken, just a living relationship – a connection – in your soul with the one true God. Here light invades a space. Where you are, Christ is. Rest in this. Your love of God deep within, is power, and your life – every step – is part of God's love and light spreading outwards.

The '*advance of God's Kingdom*' is not so much to do with 'fruit', but with knowledge, awareness. Let me explain...

You see, God is already King of the world, and owner of all souls:

***'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.'***  
(Psalm 24:1)

***'All souls are mine.'*** (Ezekiel 18:4)

The devil – the '*prince of this world*' – is already defeated, according to Jesus.

Jesus said that '*all authority in heaven*

*and on earth*’ was his.<sup>13</sup>

We honor the King by standing with him. We honor Jesus, by making him known as King. Jesus asked us to *‘acknowledge him before men’*, and to *‘testify to him.’*<sup>14</sup> And yes, there is an incredible offer for people who choose to recognize this truth, who see and ‘accept’ Jesus as their King. There is a ‘door’ here to salvation, forgiveness, healing and eternal life.

But even if I make known the ‘gospel of peace’, the name and person of Jesus Christ, and no one chooses to acknowledge him or receive him, I have still advanced the Kingdom. The proclamation through my life and my words, advances the cause and the Kingdom of God, advances the ‘purposes’ of God.

Look carefully at this passage in the first chapter of Philipians:

***‘Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me***

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<sup>13</sup> John 16:11, Matthew 28:18

<sup>14</sup> Luke 12:8-9; John 15:26-27

***has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.***

***It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.'*** (Philippians 1:12-18)

Paul is pleased that the message and name of Christ is being made known among the prison guards. Paul is pleased that the Christians are becoming 'bold' to make the gospel known. And Paul is

pleased that the gospel is being 'preached', even if not from pure motives.

Paul seems to associate the 'advance of the gospel' (vs.12) with the gospel being made known – not necessarily being accepted, or seeing fruit of belief. Obviously it is Paul's hope – and yours and mine – that through the gospel being made known, some will come to believe. However, there is true 'advance' in the proclamation – the knowledge – of the gospel among people, among a family, among a city, a region, a nation.

Jesus himself said that when the gospel was preached in all nations, he would return, the end would come. Not when the whole world comes to believe, but when the whole world has had testimony of Christ the King.<sup>15</sup>

As we walk with Jesus, we spread the light of his Spirit in this life, in this world. As we share his gospel message – his name, his Word, his love, his truth – we advance his Kingdom. There is not a

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<sup>15</sup> Matthew 24:15



seed sown – even if it does not take root – that does not honor God and advance his Kingdom borders.<sup>16</sup>

You are light in a dark world. As a believer in Jesus, one of his own, you are a blessing in this place. I sometimes just sit back and think of those believers in homes, in cities, in schools, in workplaces, all over the world – and it encourages me. I feel the power of the presence of a Christian in a place. It is salt. It is light. It dispels darkness, even darkness that this Christian is not aware of. Your life as a believer – even where you now sit alone – is deeply meaningful. Thank you for your faith, and faithfulness, even in the quiet and ‘secret’ places.

I have overlapped two ‘truths’ in this section. I’ll summarize here to finish.

**Christ in you advances the kingdom:**  
Your life, full of the Spirit of God, is light in a dark world. Your very being. You are lit up, so to speak, a lampstand. You just

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<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 126:5-6; Matthew 6:4,6,18

are. Christ in you and through you, often without even knowing.

**Your active faith – not fruit – advances the kingdom:** If you add active faith to the Spirit of Jesus in you, you make even more of an impact. It is like laying claim to who you are. With faith added to the Spirit of God in you, your words and actions can minister the love, wisdom and kindness of Christ, spreading his ‘fragrance’. And when you testify to Jesus, which is the *‘power of God for salvation’*,<sup>17</sup> even if you don’t see fruit or receive a warm welcome, know that you have advanced the Kingdom of God. Because just in proclamation of the gospel, making it known, we see in Scripture that this is to *‘advance the kingdom.’*

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<sup>17</sup> Romans 1:16

11.

You are never lost in a crowd.

God sees no crowds. He sees individuals gathered together. Never does God see a blur of human multitudes as one big, vague group. No. Every man, woman and child is made in the image of God, a unique expression, a new soul, completely and utterly different to every other human that ever did and ever will exist.

You may get lost in a crowd, or feel lost in a crowd, but to God you stand out completely. Your voice, your needs, your story and path are completely known to God and precious to God.

'Crowds' is a human experience and notion. To God, everyone, all the time, is completely unique.

One time Jesus was surrounded by many, many people, thronging around him as he walked. In fact, such was the gathering that the Bible says, *'the crowds almost crushed him.'* In this same swell of

people, one lady touched only the *‘edge of his cloak’*.

Jesus stopped and said, **‘Someone touched me.’** Peter, the disciple, said to Jesus, *‘Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.’*<sup>18</sup>

The story goes on to describe Jesus calling this woman out in the crowd, identifying her, healing her. Christ knows the individual – he knows you. The world around can feel overwhelming, and in our workplace, in our social activity, we can often feel completely unknown, unseen, unimportant, lonely. But to the Creator of the world, the King of kings, the Judge, the Savior, you are fully seen. The spotlight is always on you. Always. Your story resounds with purpose.

***‘Jesus said, ‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?’*** (Luke 15:4)

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<sup>18</sup> Luke 8:42-48

***‘Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.’ (Matthew 18:14)***

***‘When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching he said, ‘Here is a man in whom there is nothing false.’***

***‘How do you know me?’ Nathanael asked.***

***Jesus answered, ‘Before Philip called you, I saw you...’***

***(John 1:47-48)***

***‘This is what the Lord says, ‘I have called you by name, you are mine.’***

***(Isaiah 43:1)***

12.

Life on the side.

God made us and put here on earth. Earth – or living – has certain terms and conditions. Like working a job. Believe it or not, this has been a challenge for me. Let me explain...

I grew up as a 'missionary kid' (MK). So all through my younger years, my formative years, my father did not work a traditional job, for a traditional employer. He had great respect for those who did, and the financial support that our family lived on was provided by those who did; but my father was a street preacher, a missionary, and so there was a very clear divide between the life I lived in a ministry 'world', and the life others lived in the secular world.

Now, I 'lived' in the secular world, in that I was in public schools, sports, and in a country with little to no Christian 'culture', so to speak. But my home life, and my father's career and work practice, was in

a different sphere to secular economy and grind.

So my identity, especially after I truly began following Jesus in my teens, naturally understood 'full-time Christian work'. I had seen and lived how every aspect and angle of life had a greater mission: to win people to Jesus. Since childhood, there was always a 'more important' aspect to life than the daily tasks of life, and that was our witness. But now, as a young married man, I had life responsibilities. I had to learn not only how to be a full-time Christian, but a full-time person in a secular world.

Jesus called for followers, but not to hide from daily life. He prayed, ***'I pray for those who have believed in me... My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.'*** (John 17:15)

My dad used to say, *'You can fall off either side of a horse.'* I grew up with deep experience in, and deep insight to full-time Christian mission. So incorporating the mission of Jesus into my

daily, secular life, is a question not so much of learning what to do, but how and when to do it. Outreach, sharing, testifying, these were the 'tools' I was given from a young age, when others were learning about career-related skills, resumes, buying a house, car, fixing stuff.

So working a full-time job as a full-time Christian, this 'balance' I had not learned growing up. This has been a hard lesson for me to learn practically, but also to reconcile spiritually, in my soul. I felt for a long time like I was not a 'real' person in society. Not so much because I couldn't do jobs, but because I didn't feel like a 'native' to that value system.

Employment, jobs, always seemed to me of less importance than the 'Great Commission' of Jesus, i.e. to go to all the world and make disciples.

Now, you might say that a job, financial stability, etc, *is* less important than the 'Great Commission'. But that is usually the perspective of a Christian who is quite healthily established in society life. They naturally have the values and skills and 'belief' in the importance of life



responsibilities, and they are endeavoring for the Lord's mission to become more to them in this life. They have a good grounding in the 'world', and maybe need more of our 'citizenship in heaven' to be prevalent through their life here. Yes! That is also a challenge. That might be your challenge? Mine was the reverse.

One way I dealt with this dichotomy of identity – earthly/heavenly – was to categorize, or 'see' my life here – my job, etc. – as *'life on the side'*. Like, my 'real' mission and 'life' is sharing Jesus and advancing the kingdom of God, and my daily grind to pay bills, etc., well, that is stuff I do in and around my real mission.

On one level this way of dealing with things looks innocent enough, even spiritual or healthy. But it lacks.

As I wrote at the beginning of this section, God made us and put us here on earth. Earth – or living – has certain terms and conditions. So it is not OK to relegate our roles and responsibilities here on earth to a second tier of importance. Jesus never did this. If we look at his life, and his

respect and honor for people, he never said or modeled or instructed, that the daily grind is less spiritual than spiritual talk and ministry. All of Christ's teachings seem to bring his Spirit *into* the daily grind. He instructs people not to abandon their daily life and relationships, but to crown him as King in their hearts, and allow this Spirit and message of hope to come *through* their daily responsibilities and relationships. Christ came to be '*with us*' in life, not to extract us from it. The challenge is deeper than separating our life on earth from our spiritual life. The challenge is actually to join them, not separate them.

I am growing in this. I am learning as I really look at the content and passages of Scripture, to see the deep value of life here on earth, and how to allow God to come in by his Spirit. After all, Jesus taught us to pray, asking that God's Kingdom come, and his will be done, here on earth.

When we separate things, and segregate things, we become categorical and usually 'lesser'. When we allow things to

come together, well, this calls for true discernment, and walking with the Spirit. And as Jesus said, when a person is born of the Spirit, they are like the wind – you hear its sound but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. (John 3:8) This is not clean-cut or categorical.

Freedom in the Spirit. God's Spirit in our daily life. Heaven up ahead, and heaven's light at our feet now.

Paul refers to '*life that is truly life.*' (1 Timothy 6:19) That life is Christ as all, and *in* all. (Colossians 3:11) It is one life, even as God is One.

So where I'm at now is that God has whispered to me, assured me that I fit just fine in society. That I am a good worker, and have my feet on the ground, and am as native to life on earth as anyone. I don't always feel this, but God has told me this is true – so I don't need to seek to 'feel' it anymore. His grace is sufficient for me in this.

God has also instructed me in being a full-time Christian as a full-time worker

and citizen in this world. It has been a long learning curve for me, to try to retain a 'zeal' for reaching the world for Jesus, but also heeding his lead in *when* and *how* to do that. And every believer has a different gifting and calling in their role in the 'Great Commission', so this 'balance' in life will look different for each person. We need to support one another, however, in finding this Spirit-led path, and particularly God's 'freedom' in the heartbeat of it.

I leave you with this: You are complete in Christ. Christ in you by his Spirit is everything. In the same way the heart is the '*wellspring of life*', so, too, Christ in you is the wellspring of your very being and value to God. Local churches may come and go, or change in your life. Christians may come and go, or let you down sometimes. Your role in the 'body of Christ' is secondary to the role of Christ in your body, so to speak.

Christ in you, with you always, and you complete in Him. It is critical that you know this. It is critical that you rest in Christ, alone or in a crowd, feeling happy

or lonely, sorrowful or excited. It is essential that you know you are complete, filled, loved by Christ wherever you find yourself, where you go.

***'In Christ you have been brought to fulness.'*** (Colossians 2:10)

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***‘Do not worry about anything. Rather, pray and tell your requests to God. And the peace of God that is beyond understanding will come over your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.’***

(Philippians 4:6-7)