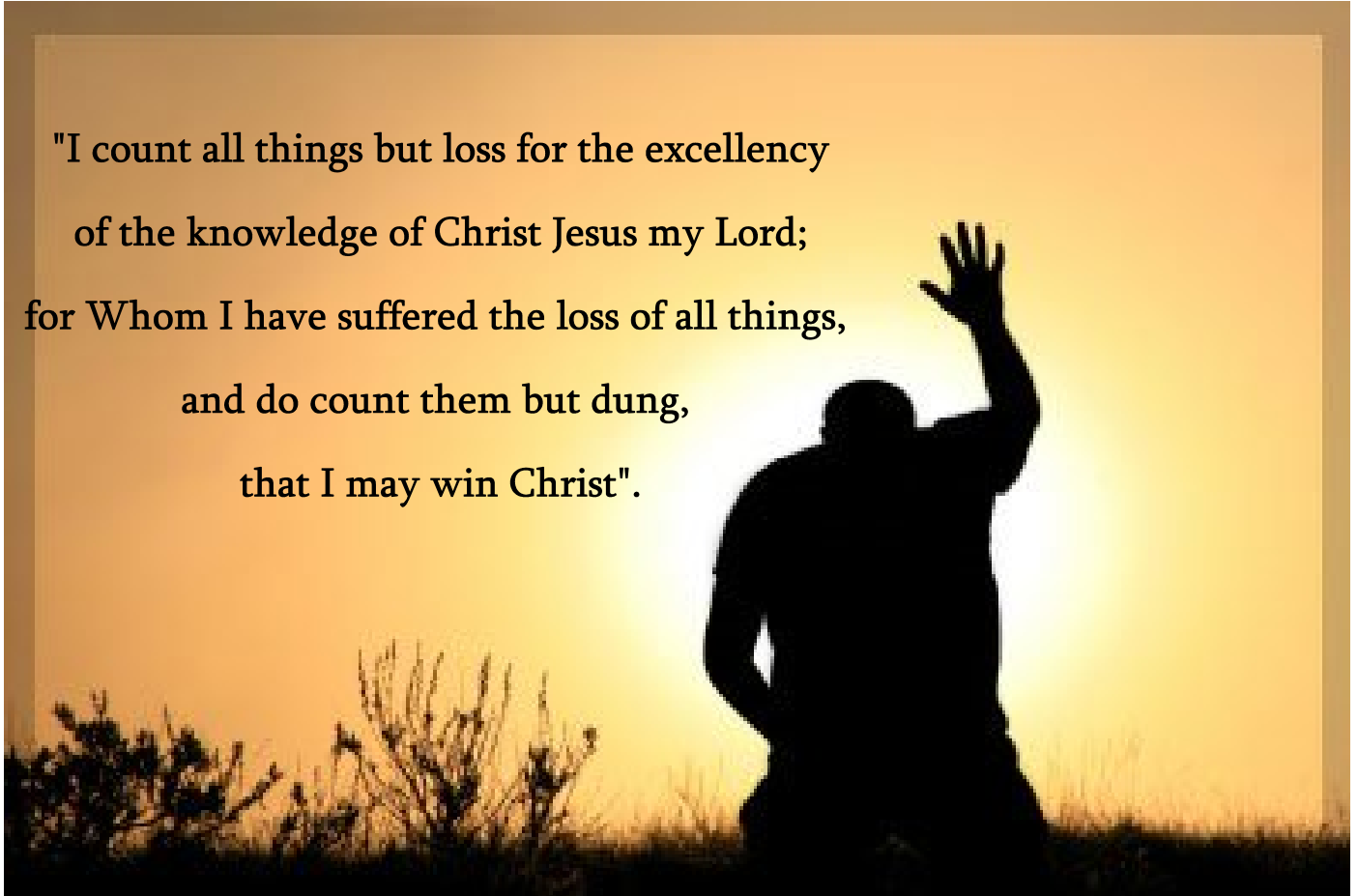


Fertilizer!

Threshing Part 8

"I count all things but loss for the excellency
of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;
for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things,
and do count them but dung,
that I may win Christ".



Introduction

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (1 Pet. 1:23).

For half a year we have been establishing some basic spiritual truths. We have discussed how we are the earthen vessels that contain the Life of Jesus. Another way of saying this could be that we are the dirt/ the soil that carries the seed within. We have also established that CHRIST IN US is the Seed planted into our soil at new birth. We have seen that Christ forming and growing unto maturity/fruitfulness in us requires a process, much like farmers cultivating a crop for harvest. Many times we have been surprised to realize that much of what we are going through is simply part of the process necessary for Christ to form in us. Once these basic realities have been set forth in our hearts, we are able to further embrace the work of our Father, the Husbandman, and the dealings of the Holy Spirit to help Jesus grow in us.

The Heart of Good Ground

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (II Cor. 4:7).

Let's take a moment to focus on our place as the earthen vessel, which could otherwise be known as “dirt”. Dirt... well, that's not the most glorious description of ourselves; but it is a precious reality when you consider that it is within these earthen vessels that God's beloved Son grows and dwells. One basic point to consider about the dirt is that it is not the seed. The whole purpose of the dirt is to be a place where the seed can grow and bring forth fruit. The scriptures declare that it is Christ IN us that is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). The dirt is not the glory, but the seed within bears this hope. Therefore, the dirt will be prepared by the farmer to be as effective as possible in nurturing the growth of the seed in it.

One very common method of helping dirt to be effective in its mission is to mix it with fertilizer. Basic gardening tells us that if you add fertilizer to the soil it helps your plants grow! It is common knowledge that one of the finest fertilizers you can mix into your soil is manure. This sounds great for gardening, but when we translate that into spiritual terms that relate to our daily lives, it is a very smelly reality! Certainly the seed benefits by the presence of the fertilizer, but the dirt that has to mix with this unpleasant substance undergoes quite an ordeal just to help that seed grow! No one enjoys the uncomfortable and even offensive elements that enter into our lives, but the heart of “good ground” (*Matt. 13:8*) will see these things as opportunities to press deeper into the Lord. Our hearts can allow even “smelly” things to humble and break us in relation to our deep need for Christ to form in us. Our hope will turn from trying to remedy our selfish and irritable reactions to the Life of the Seed growing in us and bringing forth the attitudes of Christ from within.

Paul Counted It All Dung

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:8-145).

Paul said, “I count it all dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (*Phil 3:8*). Dung is another word for manure, the stuff fertilizer is made of. Paul did not treasure the things of this life, nor did he treasure his own life. Paul felt that the only place these things had in his purpose was to press him further into the living Christ Who was his Life.

Paul's name means: "little". Paul did not count himself as great or the center of all that God was doing. Paul or "Little" would not have been ashamed to be called "dirt", dirt that existed to bear the glory of the Seed. Throughout his life we can see that he gladly accepted the harsh circumstances that came his way as fertilizer that would help Christ form in him and others.

Paul's eyes were on the prize, and He pressed into the mark of his high calling by allowing everything in his life to help bring him deeper into the true knowledge of the Lord. This "knowledge of the Lord" that Paul continuously pressed into was a knowing of Christ in the depths of His Person, a conforming to His Lamb nature, a partaking in the fellowship of His suffering, and in the power of His resurrection. Here, Paul is a beautiful picture of the dirt crying out from its true and eternal purpose, "Christ live through me"! Paul was good soil for the Seed of Christ to grow in. The heart of Paul that "counted it all dung/fertilizer to gain Christ" is what made him such a fruitful vessel of our Lord's Life.

Embrace the Fertilizer!

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,
to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).*

We have heard these principles spoken of many times in sayings such as, "diamonds shine best in a dark background", or "persecution brings forth growth",...but how about this one; "Smelly situations help Christ form in Christians"? Lets face it... none of us enjoy or cherish the unsavory, bothersome, and odious things that mix into our daily lives. Many of us believe that the cause of all of our problems and inability to get closer to Jesus comes from those distasteful elements in our lives. We may not call these things "fertilizer" but rather call them "the devil trying to destroy my faith" or "a hindrance to what God has for me". We may not "count them all dung / fertilizer", but rather pray for God to remove these elements from our soil. Our view may not embrace these things as workers helping Christ to form in us, but rather we can accuse the fertilizer of destroying our chances at fruitfulness! The real question is, "Do we trust that God knows what we need to help Jesus grow in us"? Are we praying for Him to remove the very things that He is using to fertilize Christ in us just because they are uncomfortable, troublesome and smelly to our souls? If we "bear all these things" in love for Jesus, than soon enough we will be bearing the fruit of His Life as He forms and fills us with His



nature. God works all things together to conform us to the image of His Son IF our motivation is love for His increase above love for our own souls in this earth (*Romans 8:28*).

The Purpose of The Dirt

*“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you”
(Gal. 4:19).*

Fertilizer helps us realize that we are not the Seed, and that all nutrition is meant for His growth and not our ego. If the dirt’s goal is to beautify its patch of soil, then by all means, we should sprinkle gold dust and diamonds into our garden instead of seeds. The only problem with this method is that life will never spring forth from that piece of ground. That garden will nourish no one! If dirt was the object, then we would display pots of soil with no flowers in them! How foolish to set forth humanity as the treasure while forgetting the whole purpose for which God created us was for His Son to live in us.

Conclusion

Christ in us is the hope of bringing God glory (*Col. 1:27*)! Our place as His vessel is to allow all things to become as the fertilizer that will help Him to form, grow and flourish in fruitfulness through us (*Gal. 4:19*). Our hearts should cry out, “Bring on the fertilizer Lord, if that will help Jesus to grow in me!” Yet, until we see God’s heart towards us concerning His love and care to nurture us through all these things, we will simply feel tortured and confused. May our first order of business be to seek the Lord’s face and know His heart that we might be with Him in these smelly situations in such a manner that will bring forth more of His sweet nature through us!