

## APPROPRIATION (7)

Here is an important subject that has to do with faith, and the practical reception of that which we are able to trust Him for. Appropriation does not necessarily mean to gain something new, but to set aside for our practical possession something that already belongs to us.

In order to appropriate something for our daily walk in Christ, there are two essentials: to see what is already ours in Christ; and to be aware of our need for it. Upon these two factors rests the ability to appropriate, to reach out in steadfast faith and receive that which belongs to us in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Regarding the first essential, to SEE that which is already ours, Wm. R. Newell wrote: "Paul does not ask a thing of the saints in the first three chapters of Ephesians but just to listen while he proclaims that wondrous series of great and eternal FACTS concerning them; and not until he has completed this catalogue of realities about them does he ask them to do anything at all!

"And when he does open his plea for their high walk as saints, everything is based on the revelation before given the facts of their high character and destiny as saints: 'I therefore ... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called' (Ephesians 4:1). Let us cease laying down to the saints long lists of 'conditions' of entering into the blessed life in Christ; and instead, as the primal preparation for leading them into the experience of this life, show them what their position, possessions, and privileges in Christ already are. Thus shall we truly work with the Holy Spirit, and thus shall we have more, and much more abiding fruit of our labors among the people of God."

Once we see that which is ours in Christ Jesus, practical need will cause us to appropriate, to receive the answer to that need. "There was a 'supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ' for Paul, and that made it possible for Christ to be magnified in him. It was a supply which was always available, but only appreciated and appropriated as and when the Apostle came to know his need. Life is meant to bring a succession of discoveries of our need of Christ, and with every such discovery the way is opened for a new inflow of the supply. This is the explanation of so much that we cannot otherwise understand -- this plunging of us into new tests where only a fresh supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ will meet our need. And as our need is met, as we prove the sufficiency of Christ to meet our inward need, so there can be a new showing forth of His glory through us." --H.F.

These two realities of seeing and needing bring us from childish meandering into a responsible, specific walk of faith. They take us from the "help me" attitude to that of giving thanks; from begging to appropriation. Notice what L. L. Letgers, co-founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators, has to say about this: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 1:3 RV). If you run over in your mind and find one single blessing with which God might bless us today, with which He has not already blessed us, then what He told Paul was not true at all, because He said, 'God hath.' It is all done. 'It is finished.' God hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies! The great pity of it all is that we are saying, 'O God bless us, bless us in this, bless us in that!' and it is all done. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies." As C. A. Coates said, "It is appropriation that test us. How often we stop at admiration."

From time to time the Holy Spirit will bring to our attention a certain aspect of the Word in a striking manner, and we will rejoice to see and believe that it is ours in Christ. It may be, for instance, the truths of Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Besides the usual personal situations, the uncertainty, strife and tensions of world conditions provide just what is needed for the believer to abide, to rest in the Lord Jesus. The need exists, and when he sees the rest in Him, all there remains to do is appropriate!

So far so good. The believer sees what he possesses in Christ, and the need enables him to reach out and confidently appropriate and accept the required rest. This appropriation must be a case of clear, scriptural, specific trust. We are not to "ask amiss." And now comes the critical phase, the key to it all. In most instances of appropriation, there is a waiting period between the acceptance and the receiving -- often of years. Our responsibility is to patiently wait upon Him during the time necessary for Him to work into our character, our life, that which we have appropriated in Christ -- in this instance, His rest, steadiness, assurance, security. "A God ... who worketh for him that waiteth for him" (Isaiah 64:4b ASV).

Mr. T. Austin-Sparks gives us two valuable thoughts regarding this all-important gap -- usually a matter of years -- between the actual appropriation, and the practical experience. "Every bit of truth we receive, if we receive it livingly, will take us into conflict and will be established through conflict. It will be worthless until there has been a battle over it. Take any position the Lord calls you to take, and, if you are taking it with Him, you are going through things in it, and there will be an element added by reason of the battle. You have taken a position -- yes, but you have not really got it yet, the real value of it has not been proved. You have not come into the real significance of it until there has been some sore conflict in relation to it."

"As the result of the work of His cross, and as the grand issue of His resurrection, eternal life is received already by those who believe. But while that life is itself victorious, incorruptible, indestructible, the believer has to come by faith to prove it, to live by it, to learn its laws, to be conformed to it. There is a deposit in the believer, which in itself needs no addition, so far as its quality is concerned. So far as its victory, its power, its glory, its potentialities are concerned nothing can be added to it. But the course of spiritual experience,

of spiritual life, is to discover, to appropriate, and to live by all that the life represents and means." --T. A-S.

Now we have seen a third element involved in our appropriation. After we have seen our possessions in Christ, and become aware of our need, then we must give Him the necessary time to work the appropriation into our everyday walk. If we are looking for our needs to be met in the next interview, the next devotional book, the next series of special meetings, the next hoped for "revival," then reality will never come.

In this matter of Christian development, there is no shortcut, no quick and easy way. The Husbandman builds into the believer that which He intends to minister through him to others. In order to minister Life to others, what one does and says must flow from what he is. "For it pleased the Father that in him [Christ Jesus] should all the fulness dwell"; "For we are made partakers of Christ"; "That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"; "For your life is hid with Christ in God"; "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (Colossians 1:19; Hebrews 3:14; Ephesians 3:19; Colossians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 4:11b).

How often we simply admire and talk about truths the Holy Spirit reveals to us in the Word, whereas His primary purpose in giving them to us is that we might stand upon them in faith, waiting confidently for Him to make them an integral part of our life. "A prophet is one who has a history, one who has been dealt with by God, one who has experienced the formative work of the Spirit. We are sometimes asked by would-be preachers how many days should be spent in preparation of a sermon. The answer is: At least ten years, and probably nearer twenty! For the preacher matters to God at least as much as the thing preached. God chooses as His prophets those in whom He has already worked what He intends to use as His message for today." --W. Nee