

“Let’s Go Deeper!”

(Jonah) Part One

This booklet is written in thankfulness to our heavenly Father Who knows the deep longings of our hearts to be with Him in oneness even when we find ourselves fleeing from His presence. What incredible love that He would not stop pursuing us but ever work to bring us into the glorious reality of our union with His Son!

God’s Nature

There is a cry from within the heart of the Church to know the Lord in greater measure. This hunger is not for more knowledge, ministry, or gifts. It is the yearning of longing hearts that desire to enter into a knowing of Christ in His depths.

What does it mean to “go deeper”? There are endless volumes of information to know about the Lord, but deep within God is His nature. We can know everything about a man and still not understand his innermost being. Similarly, we can know many things about God and His Cross and still be ignorant concerning His nature. Hidden within the pages of the Bible is God’s true wisdom: a little slain Lamb Who appears to those who love Him. It is in this Lamb that we find the nature of God. The simplicity of this little Lamb, weak and slain, seems foolish to many. To find Him as the wisdom of God can be offensive. The spirit in which He proceeds confuses the wise and causes others to stumble. He is so often misunderstood and unrecognized that even the most diligent searcher is in danger of missing Him, but the Lamb alone bears the image of Who God is.

Bearing His Image

True depth comes from someone who bears from deep within the Spirit of the Lamb and not just the knowledge of the message of His Cross. The Cross without the Lamb would have accomplished nothing. Because the nature of God in Christ travailed on that Cross it became effectual for our salvation. And even now today, the Cross without the Lamb is just two pieces of wood that have no power. In other words, doctrines about the Cross are empty until the spirit of the Lamb fills them. It is possible for me to know and describe great and deep realities of the Cross, and yet be found shallow of His Cross nature in my core motivations. It is when we determine to bear the image of the message that the mystery of God’s wisdom can be embraced, for it is the Lamb that opens the seals. Someone must love God for Who He is to receive the essence of His Person as that which is of the utmost importance.

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In His Bosom

Our relationship with the Lord is based on our position “in” Christ. God put us in His Son so that through oneness we can partake of His nature rather than just knowing things about Him. In John chapter one Jesus is called the Word of God. Jesus as the Word Himself came out from the bosom of the Father, and this speaks of depth. The Word of God was sent from His place inside of the bosom of the Father, and not from the height of a mental concept or an eternal design in God’s mind (Jn. 1:18). The Son’s relationship with the Father was in oneness of being and not agreement of doctrine, for even His doctrine was not His own (Jn. 7:16). God’s Son was sent forth as the very expression and exact likeness of the Father Himself (Jn. 14:7, Heb. 1:3). He expressed the Father through bearing His image from deep within. Jesus manifested what true depth is and from where it proceeds.

The Word of God is not information or a mandate to minister, but the image of God Who must again be “made flesh” as He manifests through us. There is a puffing up that can come from knowledge about the scriptures, yet there is a raising up that comes from knowing Christ in the power of His resurrection. Christianity is not an information culture but a people who have been joined to Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The “height” of being called and sent of God to serve, or of receiving an anointing from “on high” does not validate or represent true depth. Because Christ is Life and not doctrine or duty, what has been heard from heaven must be wrought deep in the earth of our hearts before it will bring forth any fruit. His Word must bring forth His Life.

Come Away

Where do we live? Can we be tossed to and fro with every wind the blows over the surface of the water? Is what we once thought to be of great depth able to be blown down with the power of a storm? If we go low enough these surface disturbances will not cause our entire house to fall down, but instead we will find ourselves being rooted into the deep and unchangeable realities of God’s Person. “Tossed to and fro” comes from being found in ourselves rather than lost in Him.

There are many movements that occur upon the surface of the waters. Here we find so many things to get caught up in amid the waves with exciting ups and sudden letdowns. But farther down beneath the surface it becomes still and quiet. Movements that occur in these waters are vast and stir from a place far nearer the heart of the Lord than the surfaces’ trembling. Jesus’ own disciples resembled these lively waters, for outward events often caused a flurry of activity among them. But there is one who found rest in the bosom of Jesus. Even as John, we must come away from all of the external surroundings and press into Jesus’ bosom so that we can know Him as those who are in Him and one with His nature. Indeed, this will require a greater stepping out on our part.

Will You Launch Out?

“Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.” (Luke 5:4)

Launching out can simply be understood as allowing our hearts to become open for the Holy Spirit to share and bring forth Christ in ways that we have not yet known. It can feel safe and comfortable to remain in the waters that we have already possessed, yet love for God will motivate some to respond to the needs and longings of His heart! As we comprehend God’s desire for us to know Him in conformity to the Lamb, then we will find ourselves running to Him even when it requires setting a course for deeper waters.

As we launch out to know Christ more fully we will cast ourselves into the Word of God so completely that it will cause us to immerse from the washing changed (Rom. 2:2). If we stay immersed in the Word then we will become saturated and prepared by the Holy Spirit for God to unveil His Son in us. Water in the scriptures symbolizes God’s Word and the washing of water by His Word. God desires the water of His Word to be received in such depth that truth can be found in the inward parts. There must be a time of reckoning and knowing the Word of the Cross that will eventually come to the revelation that we have been crucified with Christ and now it is Christ that lives in us.

Conformity

Up to this point we have considered what is deep in God (His nature) and our deep need to be conformed to His nature. To fully “go deeper” in the Lord we will have to allow what is in Him to replace what is in us. This process is called, “being conformed to the image of Christ”. Truly, it is the work of God through the application of His Cross.

A Cry From The Deep

“Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.” (Ps. 130:1)

For those who love God and are called according to His purpose, all things will work together to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom.8:28-29). Psalm 77:19 says, “Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path is in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known”. God’s way in the sea is not to overwhelm us, but rather to bring us into the reality that our old life is dead and buried with Christ (c.f. Rom. 6). As the waters compass us and the depths close in, our salvation is found in embracing that we have been joined to Christ in His resurrection. We then lift our eyes from the storm and know ourselves in the realm of His fullness.

In these “great waters” our old concepts become broken up so that a new foundation can be laid, which is the revelation of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified (I Cor. 3:11). At times this process may be so covered over with circumstantial waves that it becomes hard to perceive the transformation being accomplished deep in our hearts. Yet in the pressures of these “great waves” we will more clearly see that it is the Resurrection Himself that

lifts us out from our own deadness. Although this work may not be joyous during its season, the end is greater fruitfulness. A deep well can produce much water, and a vessel that has been emptied of itself and filled with resurrection life will have much treasure for others. Therefore, we should not fear circumstances that will press us beyond our measure, but rather trust in the God Who raises the dead. It is when we are in situations that are above our own strength that we learn not to trust in ourselves but to truly know Christ in the power of His resurrection. Paul presents it clearly for us in this way, “For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God, Who raises the dead, Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in Whom we trust that He will yet deliver us” (II Cor. 1:8-10).

Step Into The Process

Jesus said to Peter from His place in the deep, “leave the boat, move into my realm and come to me.” Peter did not yet fully have faith to walk on the water, but his passionate heart is the substance that voyagers are made of. He was willing to step into depths unknown in order to get to Jesus. Peter desired to relate to Jesus on a level that went beyond surface issues and therefore stepped out into the storm and its waves in order to be with Jesus.

Abandoning ourselves to know Christ and to be conformed to His image can bring on all kinds of trouble and irritation, yet great pearls are formed in such places. Much of what we learned in the “heights” of mountain-top fellowship with the Lord will break forth in Life as Christ is given place to possess our deep and inward parts (Ps. 52:6). When this happens the sweet aroma of Christ will fill even the dark valleys, for we will walk through them bearing the fragrance of His knowledge (II Cor 2:15)! The essence of the knowledge will begin to affect people because Christ will be coming forth as life.

Jesus said on His way to the Cross that a seed had to fall into the ground and let death work before it would become fruitful. For the information we know about the Lord to transform into His savor we must first hide His Word in our hearts and allow it to grow. Then, underneath the dark soil, the outer husk will break away and what once was a seed will begin to spring forth into a plant.

Digestion

God told Ezekiel that His Word would be sweet in his mouth yet bitter in his belly (Eze. 3:3). Digesting what we eat is part of the process required for the food to bring nourishment and growth. If we eat a lot of food and do not digest any of it, then what good is it? A surface drink of the Word is refreshing, but to allow the depth of the Word to be worked in us we must go through this process of God conforming us to the image of His Son. It can be enjoyable to embrace the teachings of “deeper life”, but have we yet fully abandoned ourselves into His depths? At this point, if you are wondering if you are

the only one lacking in this area then rest assured that there have been those who have gone before you and will be many to come after. The Old Testament prophet Jonah was faced with this dilemma and found himself fleeing from the very presence of God.

JONAH

The Depths are Calling

“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” (Jonah 1:3a)

Let's get a few things straight: Jonah was not fleeing from Nineveh, he was fleeing from the presence of God. He was running from the cost of going deeper in the Lord, yet God continued to call him into a greater fellowship in His Son. He beckoned Jonah to “Arise and go to Nineveh”, but instead Jonah fled from God's presence and began a continuous descent downward. First he went down to Joppa (1:3) and then he went down into a ship bound in the opposite direction of Nineveh (1:3). When a great storm came at sea, Jonah went down into the innermost part of the ship (1:5). A little while later Jonah was cast out of the ship and down into the raging sea (1:15). In the sea, a great fish swallowed him and took him down to the place that Jonah described as “the belly of hell” where the depths closed in round about him (2:2,5). Even though Jonah had been running from going deeper with the God, he found himself at the lowest place after all. It was in this place Jonah said that he went down to the bottoms of the mountains (2:6).

While it is true that Jonah was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, the scriptures also declare that God had cast him into the deep, in the midst of the seas (2:3). It was in these great waters that Jonah would come to know the very presence of God that He was fleeing from and embrace Him as salvation. It would be down there at the very bottom that Jonah would receive the True Foundation and allow it to be laid in his heart.

It will cost us our lives to know the presence of God in a greater depth than just surface experience. The cost can cause all of us to flee at times, and yet the mercy of God continually calls us back to Himself into greater fellowship. His heart longs and stirs for us to launch out into greater depths of union. To leave the dry land of our life and jump into the unknown depths of His Life requires a love and trust in God's ability to bring us forth from these deep waters more conformed to the image of His Son.

God desired to form His Son in Jonah and needed to prepare a vessel that He could send to the Ninevites. The issue in God's heart was care for others and an increase of His Son, yet the focus in Jonah's heart was his own personal issues and the cost that was being required. God was calling Jonah as a vessel that would bear His Lamb to others. Many receive the call, but few choose the narrow path of allowing the Lamb to be expressed as Life. Jonah was fleeing from this upward call on a ship bound for Tarshish, yet God's mercy sent forth a great wind into the sea. As the breeze began to blow Jonah would eventually awaken to hear the Spirit's call.

It could be easy to assume that we would not be like Jonah and flee from the presence of God, but maybe we should look closer at that thought. Jonah was not fleeing from the presence of God in a praise and worship service, neither was he trying to avoid the presence of the Lord Who heals and blesses us. Jonah was trying to avoid knowing the Lord in a way that would cost him his life. This kind of knowing can only come from allowing the work of the Cross to become effectual inwardly.

Wake up and Jump In!

“So the shipmaster came to him and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.” (Jonah 1:6) “And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm for you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.” (Jonah 1:12)

The crying out of the sea may have represented the stirring of God’s heart to bring Jonah into a greater depth of fellowship in His Son’s death, burial, and resurrection. Deep was crying unto deep as God’s depths began crying unto Jonah’s depths. The sea was raging and would not be calmed. The men on the ship tried to satisfy the sea’s demands with sacrifices and prayers to their gods as well as casting out their possessions. During all of this Jonah was sleeping in the bottom of the boat. Finally the captain of the ship had to wake him up and command him to pray for help. Even this heathen captain knew that it was time for Jonah to awake from his slumber and realize there are greater issues at stake than his own life and personal issues. Finally they cast lots to find out who was responsible for this phenomenon, and the lot fell on Jonah.

Jonah then explained to his fellow travelers that he was a Hebrew that feared the God Who created the sea and the dry land, but that he was also fleeing from His presence. The men asked him what they should do to calm the sea, and Jonah told them to throw him into it. The men did not want to do this so they tried to bring the ship to land, but could not because the sea was too tempestuous. Finally they cried that God would forgive them for releasing Jonah unto the sea, but they knew this was what the Lord was requiring.

As modern day disciples in the midst of our own storms, we may find ourselves willing to let go of everything but our own life. Yet it will soon become evident that to go the way of the Cross is not the denial of things, but the denial of self. We may try to “empty the boat” of everything in it, but God wants us to empty the boat of ourselves. The Lord is not wanting unchanged disciples with no possessions sitting in a boat, but those who have left their own lives and come to know Him in the power of His resurrection. Jonah did not try to empty the boat of things but went deeper down into it. Again the method is not for us to “get lower”, whether that be through reactions such as depression or humility, but for us to know that we are dead and Christ is our Life. Going deeper is just dead weight unless it puts away the old and allows New Life to come forth.

Really Calming The Sea

God did not want to still Jonah's circumstance but rather He stirred the waters up so much that Jonah had to be thrown into them before they would calm and be satisfied. God was demanding a forming in the depths rather than a calming on the surface. Can we not see God's passionate pursuit for those He loves and desires to be with Him in oneness?

Jonah's release from the boat into the sea wasn't primarily to stop the crisis on the ship, nor was it punishment for Jonah's rebellion to God's call. In reality it was Jonah's first step into a deeper relationship in the Lord. Everyone on the ship was spared because Jonah went down into the deep. It was his first step out of the boat and into the depths. In these waters he would experience the mighty work of the Cross. God's faithfulness to bring this son into maturity is evident.

Those around us need a depth of Christ's life that we may not possess yet. We cannot minister to others what has not yet been worked in us by Life. We each must decide how we will respond to God's cry from the deep. The Lord knows where this process will eventually lead, for the Lord sees the great need for vessels that bear the Life of Christ. Yet, to Jonah, at this point it all may have yet seemed like a swirling, confusing catastrophe that was carrying him down into deeper darkness than he had ever known. (continued in Part II)

A Poem For Jonah

A lad called to be a son,
for the Father had set His heart on him to become one.

For Jonah, a wearisome and loathsome hail
that followed him into even the sea's high gale.

I don't want the footman or the horsemen too,
I don't want to be that near to You.

Your presence pursues with depths that fear me,
I'll lose my life if I let You that near me.

A life without crisis, without pain, without cost,
I'll live for You, but not with such loss."

But son, loss is gain, for Nineveh calls,
And I need to send my prepared vessel before she falls.

You will see that Israel's rising and falling was set
in a wee child who had not met Calvary yet.

But who will go to Nineveh for Us,
In whom is this Lamb revealed enough?

Can you flee a calling so high?
For My ways in the sea answer the heaven's sigh.
To bring forth sons in the image of the First Born,
To allow the Spirit of the Lamb to be formed.

My compassion is kindled by Nineveh's cry
But whom shall we send, who will see with Our eyes?
To pour out mercy and give Life freely
The mind of the Lamb alone will be willing.

Lord, it's not fair, my pain for their pleasure.
Their gift from what pressed me beyond my measure?
Are You cruel and unfair, is the joke on me?
Or was there a greater purpose in the depths of the sea?

Dear Jonah my dealings extended way beyond you
They were deeper than the sea and far beyond the skies blue.
I have called you into fellowship with the Son,
In His death and burial and resurrection.

Mystery of mysteries that heaven's praise
Is a little lamb sitting as though He was slain.
His death is our life, His loss is our gain.
He fled not the Cross, but endured the shame.

Had He not embraced His time outside the camp,
Had He rejected the depths and fled from the pressure,
Then how could we ever have received from His measure?

Because God loves Nineveh, He deals with you
A choosing that in oneness He might pour through you
To reach the multitudes that need life,
The dying of the Lord Jesus is borne through his wife.

Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him outside the camp,
Let us embrace the depths and bear their stamp.
A Lamb within, still given for others...
A continuing city causes Nineveh to recover.

But you don't understand and you're angry with God?
It's not fair, and the path is too hard?
Have you seen the Lamb, have you known His heart?
Fill your eyes with His face and find a new start.

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things on earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.” ***