

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, October 17, 2010
They had been with Jesus (Part 2)

Last week we saw that Jesus' desire was for us to be with him and that the result would be life transforming. We noted that Jesus revealed himself as the light of the world and yet told us that we were the light of the world. The reason that both could be true is that when we receive Christ as Lord and Savior, his life becomes our life, his attributes become ours and we pass from death to life because the one who is life is now living in us. I want to add to this message with an important foundational truth that Jesus alludes to but does not elaborate on, perhaps because the Cross and Pentecost were going to have to take place for it to be fully realized.

Matthew 5:14-17

14 **"You are the light of the world.** A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, **let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.** 17 **"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.** (NIV) The underlined portion above can almost seem like an odd parenthetical statement, but the truth is the key to our being able to do what Jesus is calling us to do. Your light can only be light if it is truly light. In Matthew 6:23b Jesus says, *"If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"* Jesus was preparing the way for the new wineskin of God's grace. The possibility remains for people to think something is the light and be totally wrong. The subtlety of "self-effort" can sneak in on us when we get spiritually dry. We can revert to a system of good works to make ourselves feel justified before God. We can begin to think that we need to do things that will make us acceptable to God only to find that we are putting our trust in our actions rather than on Christ (not that actions are unimportant, but the motivation is the key). The Apostle Paul shares some of his testimony with the Galatians in chapter one when he can't believe that these Christians were being seduced into believing a different gospel. With the strongest language possible he launches out and condemns those that are leading them astray for their trying to get these believers to go back into a legalistic trust in the Law for their salvation. Jesus did not come to abolish the law but reveal that he is the fulfillment of it and that our right standing before God does not come from our living by the letter of the law, but of total trust in him alone for our salvation. We are accepted by God totally by what Christ did for us on the cross. These Judaisers, as they were called, wanted to add to their faith an adherence to the law for their justification, wanting these new believers to get circumcised to gain that right standing. Paul tells them in chapter two that no one will be justified by observing the law.

In chapter three he asks, *"Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?"* The word faith is a noun while believe is a verb. They are both the same thing. To believe is to have faith. We have a right standing before God through our faith in the finished work of Christ alone. We are believing what we heard! Paul tells us in chapter five that if they are trying to be justified by their observance of the law they have been alienated from Christ and have fallen away from grace. He says, *"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."* In Titus 2:11-14 Paul teaches that it is the grace of God that *"teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."*

Are you hungry to become someone that is known as *one who has been with Jesus*? It can only happen by doing just that, not by going back to a system of trying to be good. Trust that he will produce the changes in us as we spend time with him and thank him for what he has accomplished for us.