

Sunday March 11th, 2007

'Nothing in Me...' – Part Five

1). Joh 14:28 ¶ *"You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. 29 "And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. 30 "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. 31 "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.*

a). We have seen over and over in past weeks the reasons why the ruler of this world had nothing in time, space or relationship with Christ.

b). Christ's involvement with any aspect of the present world system would have given common ground to Satan. And this could never be.

c). This is why you do not see Jesus trying to bring about political change during His earthly ministry.

d). Nor does He intervene to stop the oppression, the mistreatment and the corruption that went hand in hand with Roman occupation.

e). Rather you see Him willingly and knowingly submitting Himself to a Gentile world power under the control of fallen angels.

f). Heb 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels.....*

g). Mt 22:17 *"Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? 19 "Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" 21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

h). Joh 19:10 *Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" 11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.*

i). Joh 10:17 *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."*

- 2). And we know why Jesus' actions were conditioned in this way
- a). Joh 18:36 *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world.*
 - b). Heb 12:2 *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
- 3). Christ's focus throughout His earthly ministry, was the establishment of His Kingdom in fulfillment of the 7th Day. A time yet future when He and His companions would replace Satan and his fallen angels as the rulers over the inhabited earth.
- a). In that day righteousness and justice will prevail. It cannot do so under the present system of rulership.
 - b). But until that Day would come, Christ at His first advent would choose to lay down His life enduring the injustice and inhumanity that accompanied His trial and execution.
- 4). Now here is something else we should keep in mind, that we are speaking of God the Son, the second person of the Trinity – the One who in the beginning was with God and was God.
- a). Heb 1:2 (God) *has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*
 - b). Heb 2:10a ¶ *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things,*
 - c). Ps 50:10 *For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills.*
- 5). Jesus, the One who made all things and for whom all things exist would not exercise His right of ownership before the time appointed by the Father.
- a). Php 2:5 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*
 - b). 2Co 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

6). And here is our jumping off point for today – even though all things are rightfully His, He did not let His ownership of all things detract from His focus of the joy set before Him.

a). All things will be His in the fullness of time as the Father has appointed Him ‘heir of all things’ – yet while in the likeness of men, knowing the Father’s promises, covetousness was not found in Him. Mt 17:24 ¶ *When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" 25 He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" 26 Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. 27 "Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."*

b). Any notion of covetousness would obviously have given the ruler of this world something in Christ. Christ however did not need to exercise His right as a Son within the present world system because He knew that all would be His in the age to come. An inheritance to be shared with His companions – the many sons he will bring to glory.

c). To exercise His right to all things in this age would have placed Him in the power of the ruler of this world.

8). Now we also are called to be sons of God and look to be adopted as first born sons so as to be coheirs with Christ – His companions - in the coming Kingdom.

a). In like manner, as Christ is appointed heir of all things, we as coheirs are appointed heir of all things with Him.

b). And it would be the desire of the god of this age to lead us down a path of covetousness thereby aligning ourselves with him. Something scripture adamantly teaches against.

c). Eph 5:3 ¶ *But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;*

d). Col 3:5 ¶ *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,*

e). Ps 119:36 *Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness.*

9). Now, covetousness is manifested in two ways –

a). Firstly, through believing the lie that in the accumulation of wealth of itself is to be found security and happiness. The more money I have the more secure I am.

b). And secondly, in exchanging our wealth for things. Again believing the lie that the more things I possess the happier and more secure I will be. More/bigger/better.

c). In both of these is seen a reliance on the things of this world rather than faith in that which God has said about the world to come.

d). And this of course has direct consequences for our fruitfulness in respect of the Kingdom – remember this from the Parable of the Sower – Mt 13:22 *"Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful."*

e). The deceit of riches is that which we see in covetousness.

10). If we go back to our foundation in Genesis we find this very same tension between earthly riches and the riches of God's promises demonstrated in Abraham's giving of the tithe to Melchizedek – Ge 14:22 *But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 "that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich' -*

a). Now it is without doubt that Abraham was a very wealthy man, but his security and his hope were not in the abundance of things, but in the promises of God - Heb 11:10 *for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

11). Jesus Himself gives a parable about covetousness - Lu 12:15 *And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will*

those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

a). Now this is particularly interesting because of what God says in v20 – ‘then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

b). Clearly they will not be the rich man’s, but the implication of this statement is that they could have been.

c). If this rich man had invested his wealth properly he could have seen a return on it when he stands before the Lord.

12). Mt 6:19 ¶ *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

a). And here is the key for us in v21 – wherever we are intent in storing up wealth is the place where our heart is.

b). The question would be is our heart locked into this world or the world to come?

c). One way we can know is seen in where we are laying up treasure.

d). Whether we have much or little is not really the issue, the issue is where do we have our hope?

e). Php 4:12 *I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

f). In the great faith chapter of Hebrews 11 we read - Heb 11:36 *Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,*

g). Now please note that these OT saints are not commended because of their poverty, but because of their faith in the promises of God.

h). As with Paul, whether we are abased or whether we abound is immaterial to our hope.

13). Now let’s continue reading in Philippians 4 - Php 4:14 *Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. 15 Now you Philippians know*

also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. 18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. 19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

(Teach this)

a). Here we see Paul in need and the church at Philippi, as a corporate body comes to his aid.

b). Their recognizing his need and then meeting it, as we have seen, is described as a sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

c). And in the church's giving is seen fruit that abounds to their account – their treasure in heaven.

d). Now here is the thing – that fruit would not have abounded to their account apart from their brother in Christ having a need.

e). If Paul had been too embarrassed to receive their gift, he would actually have been preventing them from accruing fruit for the coming Kingdom.

f). Lu 16:11 *"Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 "And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? 13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."*

14). Continuing with the idea of corporate responsibility for individuals within the body, let's look at two scriptures from Acts –

a). Ac 2:38 *Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 ¶ And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through*

the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

b). Ac 4:34 *Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; **and they distributed to each as anyone had need.***

15). What we are seeing here in the fledgling church in Jerusalem is the meeting of individual needs, as they arose, from within their corporate resources.

a). Now there is no suggestion that we must all rush off and sell all we have. Similarly, in the account of the rich young ruler, the selling of all he possessed was not the real issue, it was one of covetousness. His focus was on this world and not the world to come.

b). And this is what we need to see from our scriptures in Acts – those who had possessions did not hold them so tightly, they were not covetous of them, that they would not lay them down for the sake of others.

16). And we as a corporate body must have the same mindset.

a). Ga 6:2 *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

b). The law of Christ? Doesn't this bring us again to the royal law?

c). Jas 2:8 ¶ *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; 9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*

17). Let's look at a few more scriptures –

a). 1Ti 6:17 *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal [age lasting] life.*

b). Jas 2:14 ¶ *What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

c). 1Jo 3:16 *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

d). Ga 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

e). Jas 1:27 *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

f). Our faith, demonstrated through our obedience to the word, with regards to our love for one another, must be brought to its goal through action. Scripture gives us a corporate mandate to address the needs within the body.

g). Many times it is easy to ask for prayer and help with emotional healing, but so difficult to make our material needs known.

h). But we must realize that material needs are no less important than spiritual needs. And God has provided a way within the body to take care of them.

i). And if we do not make them known we deny the opportunity for us to corporately produce fruit by meeting those material needs.

j). In this is another occasion when we can die to self.

18). There are obvious applications here for us all on an individual level, but on a corporate level the Elders have decided to establish a specific account, which we will call 'The One Another Account' from which we can meet the needs of those within our body who need material help.

a). We have designated 10% of our current financial assets to begin this account and 10% of all we receive from this time onwards will be placed there.

b). And we would like to extend to opportunity to all to participate directly in this by giving into this account.

c). Now this would of course be in addition to our usual giving not instead of.

d). And I should also like us to know that our ability to help will not be limited to a bank balance.

e). I like to think that if it became necessary we would sell all we have to meet the needs amongst us because we understand the divine exchange that takes place with regards to the age to come.

19). And for those amongst us who have need, let me encourage you not to be embarrassed to make that need known to the Elders – having the mindset, like Paul, of not seeking the gift but the fruit that will abound to our collective account.

a). Without a need to be met we cannot receive this kind of fruit.

20). Let us be mindful of the charge laid against the church generally in this Laodecian time in which we live - Re 3:17 *"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'*

a). The abundance the Lord has provided us with is not for ourselves; rather we are to be a conduit for that abundance through the proclamation of the word and meeting the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ within our setting.

b). Let us embrace such a great and glorious privilege with rejoicing and thanksgiving.