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POSSESS YOUR SOUL.

THE PREEMINENCE OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE EMINENCE OF THE CHURCH- Speaking of Jesus, Paul writes, *"And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."* (Col.1:18) Preeminence means superiority, supremacy, greatness, excellence, yet Jesus was born of a woman, in a flesh and blood body. He identified with us as an earthly man, an Adam man; and He took this man all the way to death and the grave. But this man Jesus, became the Firstborn of many brethren as He arose from the dead! He was raised from the dead by the Spirit of holiness that dwelt in Him. Jesus Christ is the firstborn of a new mankind creation, (the last Adam), which holds the preeminence over all other creatures. And He reigns as King, Head of a body of saints, which are the "called out" ones, with whom He has a love relationship through His Holy Spirit. These saints have been called out of all the systems of men, they form the virgin church whose spiritual womb receives His pure word, the new seed that gives birth to the sons in her. This is the mystery of the ages, Christ the son born in you, the hope of glory.

Jesus said, that He would build His church, His chosen people, His body, His bride, upon the Rock of revelation which Peter demonstrated, when he recognized Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. *"And I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Matt.16:18) The gates of hell are the powers that keep our souls enslaved to fear, torment, death and the grave. All souls have been struggling to get out from under the captivity of this hellish violence and death cycle, while Jesus has been gathering His saints and quickening them by the power of His Holy Spirit. He has given them ears to hear, eyes to see and hearts to understand their calling. He has been gathering them, cleansing them, teaching them, testing them and anointing them for the day that as new creatures in Christ, they will stand, triumphant in front of the gates of hell, and set all the captives free. Yes, the gates of hell shall not prevail, the sons of God who themselves were the first to be delivered, will in turn deliver the groaning creation from the corruption of sin and death.

THE SAME JESUS, AN EXTENDED GOSPEL- John the Baptist had been preaching the baptism of repentance, opening the way for the ministry of Jesus. Jesus came to His own, (Israel), and His own received Him not, but when He heard that John was cast into prison, He began to go about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. His teachings were a bright light into man's gross darkness. *"The people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light sprung up. From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matt.4:16-17). This Gospel was a great revelation, a call to all who would listen. Jesus had come for the Jews only, but this changed when the Spirit sent Him to Samaria, a region prohibited to Jews. It was there that He revealed Himself and His Father to a Samaritan woman at the well.

Later, the Spirit sent Peter to break bread at the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. This was forbidden in the Law, nevertheless, Peter was commissioned of God to go and to eat there. At first, this was very hard

for Peter to do; how could he break the rules he had kept so faithfully. Great changes were taking place among the disciples of Jesus, but the most shocking for them, came after Jesus apprehended Saul of Tarsus, as he was on his way to persecute the Christians. Saul was a Pharisee of Pharisees, yet, with no warning, Jesus called him, and rather roughly brought him down from his high horse. He ordained him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. The new Paul, wasted no time to take on the mission at hand. He did not consult with the apostles who had walked with Jesus, but he secluded himself to the Arabian desert for three years. There, He was taught of God, by direct revelation of the Spirit. Paul's Gospel did not come from books or from man's teaching; he had met and talked with the resurrected Lord Jesus, and he was very confident when he taught His followers saying, *"Now to him that is of power to stablish you ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret since the world began."* (Rom.16:25) The Gospel of Paul was according to the revelations that He received directly from the resurrected Christ. It was the unveiling of the mystery of full Christ, which was hid among the Gentiles from the foundation of the world. Wow! This was really new. It was hard for Peter and the other apostles to receive such a word. Peter wrote, *"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."* (II Pet.3:15-16)

Paul's Gospel opens some twenty mysteries which the Spirit revealed to him. To the church at Ephesus, Paul speaks of the mystery of God's will and the unfolding of His plan and purposes for the sons. But the most unexpected mystery revealed, is that Christ is hid among Gentiles whom God has called, foreknown, predestined and sanctified with a special anointing according to His purpose. Paul wrote, *"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. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."* (Rom.8:28-29) Indeed, God's purpose is to beget and raise many brethren for His only Son, and a great part of these brethren have been chosen and prepared from among Gentiles whose hearts love God. Paul made all this clear, but it was so new and unbelievable that Peter, who was still prone to lead the followers into keeping the Law and the circumcision, had a problem to accept. In our day, this Gospel is still considered heresy among many of the evangelicals and mainstream churches. But for those who are the called and chosen, it is joy unspeakable and full of glory. We know that later, John received glorious revelations through visions which have been mostly interpreted by the letter of the word, and have created much confusion among believers who are still in darkness.

By the Spirit, Paul saw things that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world. As the apostle to the Gentiles, he began to travel to large cities in Asia Minor, to preach his Gospel, and to gather those who had been chosen and predestined among them; he called them "saints." By definition, a saint, is one who is chosen, sanctified and set apart for a divine purpose. Paul's epistle to the saints at Ephesus begins, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."* (Eph.1:3-4) These heavenly places are not in space somewhere, they are in our hearts and minds. Paul said, *"Whereof I am made a minister; according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."*

(Col.1: 25-28) Paul loved and nurtured these new Christians, and began to open to them the truths about the Christ within them. Paul travelled tirelessly, wherever the Spirit led him to establish little groups that he called "churches." He taught them, and as he opened their understanding to the mystery of Christ, he explained their calling as sons of God. Oh how he nursed them, *"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you."* (Gal.4:19). There were divisions among the followers of Christ then, and today, there are still divisions among Christians. Some could not accept Paul's Gospel, and many are still confused by his teachings today. Paul was totally free from the Law's teaching, and he rebuked Peter when he began to teach the circumcision to the newly converted to Christ. He wrote to the saints in Colossae, who desired to return to the traditions and regulations of old Israel, *"Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in "will" worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh."* (Col.2:23) The Phillips translation of this verse is clear, *"...I know that these regulations look wise with their self-inspired efforts at worship, their policy of self-humbling, and their studied neglect of the body. But in actual practice, they do honour, not to God, but to man's own pride."*

OUR WRESTLING- The church that gathered at Ephesus was very stable and established in the Word. They were keen to recognize false teachings, and they bravely withstood persecution. Paul urged them to be prepared to stand against the coming evil day, *"Put on therefore, the whole armour of God...For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but we wrestle..."* Paul says that we wrestle. Wrestling is a close combat between two opponents, in which each try to pin the other down to the ground and render him useless. Indeed, our daily enemy, our old nature, tries to pin us down to the ground, trying to pull us away from the doctrine of Christ, and back into the old forms and traditions of Babylon. This enemy Paul says, is not a visible man but it is strong and very real. We wrestle with our thoughts and imaginations, in the heavens or high places of our minds, *"...We wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."* (Eph.6:11-13) Our worst enemy is our old, arrogant and conceited self, our old man of flesh who continually wars against the new son being formed in us. When we were babes in Christ, our God had a ring of protection around us, but as we began to grow, and come into more light, we met up with more resistance from within, and from without. Howbeit, this resistance is vital to our spiritual health; it is ordained of God, for us all who are called to be overcomers in Christ.

It is in our soul that we first learn to overcome, then, as mature sons, the Spirit will lead us to face the principalities and powers that rule over the people of the world. On that day, we will stand, having been prepared by the Holy Spirit, in the classrooms of our daily lives, being clad with the full armor of God. There is much to be said about this armor, but for now it suffices for us to know that it is made of Truth, Righteousness, the Gospel of Peace, Faith, the Helmet of Salvation and the Sword of the Spirit. It is sewn together with ceaseless prayers for all the saints. *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."* (II Cor.10:4) The Word made flesh in the sons of God, is the power working to pull down the strongholds of Satan in the world today. The wrestling of the saints began centuries ago, and the witnesses of the Word have fought to the death for that. As it is written, the witnesses have been *"laying dead in the streets"* which means that their Word and testimony has been banned from all mainstream, well known religious and political organizations. But we belong to the *"General assembly and Church of the Firstborn..."* (Heb.12:23) which has been forming on both sides of the veil. Soon, their members will arise with the voice of the Archangel, and lift up their voices loud and clear as the sound of the last trump, to deliver creation from the powers of corruption, sin and death. This will not happen because of what we do in the flesh, but because of who we have become in Christ.

POSSESS YOUR SOUL- On a day when Jesus and His disciples were beholding the riches of the temple in Jerusalem, He said, *"As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And they asked him, saying, Master, when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?"* (Lk.21:6-7). Then Jesus began to tell them about the false "christs" that will arise, and the ever increasing wars, upheavals and catastrophes that will disrupt the nations and kingdoms of the world. He spoke of great disasters, like earthquakes and famines and fearful sights that will increase in many places. And He said that His followers would suffer great persecutions. Then Jesus admonished them to not try to figure out what to do about these things, but to rest assured that He would lead them into what to say or do as they went.

Jesus still warns and admonishes us now, *"Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not be an hair of your head perish. **In your patience possess ye your souls.**"* (Lk.21:17-19) He promised that He would take care of them, but what did He mean, *"In your patience, possess ye your souls?"* He was telling His disciples, to not allow what is happening in the world and in the affairs of men, to disturb the peace of their souls. Do not get entangled in their politics, their tactics, their goals. Do not let your emotions ride up and down with what is happening in their struggles, their warfare and such. Do not try to figure who is right or wrong and take sides with them. **Possess ye your souls!** Be in charge of your emotions and reactions. Let the Holy Spirit in you, be in charge of the thoughts that rule you, Jesus did not enter into the politics of Rome or of the Pharisees. He urged us to keep our vision on the coming Kingdom of God. It is so easy to get caught up in the "herd" around us, and follow the mobs. Sons of God are not grouped together in the flesh; they are set aside. Jesus stood alone in the flesh, although He could have called upon myriads of angels.

OUR LAND OF PROMISE- There is much for us to glean from the epic story of the forty-year wilderness journey that Israel walked from Egypt to the land of Canaan. Paul wrote, *"Now all these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."* (I Cor.10:11) One of the greatest lesson for us to know, is that after God brought them through it all, their clothes did not wear out, and He provided their daily food and all their needs, they still did not know His ways, nor did they trust Him. When they came to the border of the land and saw the giants, only a few could follow Joshua and Caleb and go up to possess it. As sons, our land is not a physical, material land, it is our full redemption into the image and likeness of the resurrected Christ. It is to stand in the power of holiness, and in the power of God's righteousness and love, deliver the suffering and groaning creation. To do this, we must face the giants of sin and death, and fearlessly follow our leaders, Jesus, (Joshua) and the Holy Spirit, (Caleb), until all enemies are under our feet.

The last enemy to overcome is death. *"For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."* (I Cor.15:25-26) Jesus Christ overcame death and possessed His land of promise when He became the Firstborn among many brethren. *"...that ye may know what is the hope of **his calling**, and what the riches of the glory of **his inheritance in the saints.**"* (Eph.1:18) We are His inheritance, His brethren. By His Holy Spirit, we become the firstfruits of His resurrection. We will continue to overcome until there is no more death. *"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."* (Rev.21:4) Christ is our land of promise. Thank you Father. Thank you Son of God. Thank you Holy Spirit. All's well with our souls!

Because He is love! *Angèle Caporaso* better known as *Jackie*