

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

December 26, 2016

I, WITHOUT CHRIST

“WHAT YOU WERE WITHOUT CHRIST IS WHAT YOU ARE WITHOUT CHRIST!” A few years ago I spoke these words to a friend who had secretly returned to alcohol. This man had once served the Lord and been very bold in his faith. Having served prison time in the past for driving under the influence of alcohol, he was required to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. He would relate to me how he would “tell them all:” “You may be alcoholics, but I am not! Jesus has made me free.” While I agreed with him in part, I was always troubled by his statements. I know that Christ came into the world, died, and rose again to make us free from sin, but what troubled me was my friend’s boasting. His rejoicing seemed to be more about himself than it was in Christ Jesus. You see, I know that “I” is the most dangerous word in a Christian’s vocabulary.

The apostle Paul never thought much of “I”. Most of us remember his words *where he said, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”* ^{1 Timothy 1:15} In describing himself as the chief of sinners, Paul was referring to his statement two verses earlier where he said, *“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious...”* ^{1 Timothy 1:13} Notice he said *“Who was before...”* This tells us this is what he was prior to coming to Christ. Even though these things were in his past, this was still the way he viewed himself apart from Christ. Paul never “forgave himself” for his persecution of the church. He said *“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”* ^{1 Corinthians 15:9} No, Paul did not think much of “I”, but he thought everything of Christ. He said *“I am crucified*

with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..." Galatians 2:20 Paul was both satisfied and joyous over the fact that "I" did not live, but "I" was nailed to the cross of Christ and it was now Christ who lived in him. The glories of this new life, he always attributed to Christ Jesus and never to himself.

It is evident that Paul was not a sinner although some twist the scriptures, seeking to prove he was. He wrote to the Thessalonians, saying *"Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:"* 1 Thessalonians 2:10 To Corinth he said, *"But (we) have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."* 11 Corinthians 4:2 In every way he was a manifestation of the gospel he preached. Those who use his words in Romans 7, *"the evil which I would not, that I do,"* seeking to prove he had a "sin problem," ignore the fact that he was speaking of his life before he came to Christ when he was under the Law. Paul started that passage saying *"For **when we were in the flesh**, the motions of sins, which were **by the law**, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law..."* Romans 7:5-6 When he was under the Law he did the evil that he did not want to do, but now in Christ he served God *"in newness of spirit"* and was *"made free from sin."* Romans 6:18 I cannot help but believe that those who seek to make Paul out to be a sinner are seeking to justify the sin of their own heart.

When considering all the glories we receive in Christ Jesus, we must never forget it is Christ and not ourselves. A person having been cleansed from sin and filled with the Spirit who begins to think that this glorious walk in Christ's victory is something they can sustain of themselves, is walking into a snare of Satan. Christ is the life of God's children. Colossians 3:4 Without him, we ARE who we always were. Thank God we

never have to be without Christ, but this is more than just a confession. I have always been dismayed by those who claim such a precious salvation, but walk as though they do not particular need the Savior this very day. Christ IS our salvation! With him we are “*new creations,*” cleansed from sin and walking in victory, but without him we are the most pitiful of creatures. Paul wrote, “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” I Corinthians 10:12 Those who abide in Christ need not worry about falling because “I” is crucified with Christ, but those who believe they are sufficient in themselves will find that “I” is as damning as he/she ever was.

Let me leave you with this: We must always remember that the “*word of our testimony*” Revelation 12:11 by which we overcome the world is never something about ourselves, but it is always “*the testimony of Jesus.*” Revelation 19:10 If our testimony becomes about ourselves, it will end in shame. Even Jesus said, “*If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.*” John 5:31 The American church sings about “I, We, and Us”, preaches about “Who We Are,” and tells itself how incredible special it is every Sunday, but our nation has not found this testimony to be true. We would do well to remember the words of the scripture that say, “*He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*” I Corinthians 1:31