



Reflecting On A New Attitude At Work

Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Not I, But Christ

As we continue to REFLECT on the things God was saying to us on Sunday, and as we seek to submit ourselves to His lordship and the authority of His Word by RECALIBRATING our lives based on the things He said to us, let me remind you of God's main thrust in Colossians chapter three. God is wanting to make sure that we understand that salvation wasn't merely "receiving Christ into our life." Oh, I know we use that terminology a lot, but I'm afraid it misses the real point! Salvation is NOT when I "receive Christ into MY life"—it is when Christ "BECOMES MY LIFE"! And that is so much more than semantics! Let me say it another way...Salvation is not merely a matter of ADDITION—it is a matter of TRANSFORMATION!

Colossians 3:3-4a says,

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life..."

Do you see, we didn't just get Jesus deposited into our life! We died with Christ. We were buried with Him. And what came up out of the grave was something completely different than what went into it! We came out of the grave having been made "NEW CREATURES" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)! The way Paul refers to it in Colossians 3, is that we were made a "NEW MAN" (Col. 3:9-10)! I certainly don't want to belabor the point, but to be honest with you, I'm not sure that most people understand this point! And the implications cannot be underestimated.

You see, how we view what our salvation actually was, has everything to do with how we approach our lives on the other side of that salvation. You see, if I see it as ADDING Christ into my life, my life remains intact. I'm still the same old ME, but now, because Jesus came into me, "I" resolve that "I" will do this for Him..."I" commit myself to Him..."I" am making Jesus Lord of my life...and on, and on, and on. Oh, do you hear the fallacy of those statements? "I resolve"... "I commit"... "I am making"—I mean, don't those statements totally smack against everything that the New Testament teaches our salvation was, and is?! Man, I think the Apostle Paul would love to speak to us 21st century folk about this whole matter! The crazy thing is, he wouldn't need to say anything different than what the Holy Spirit of God used him to say to 1st century folk! I mean, can't you hear him say to us...

"What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN? For YE ARE BOUGHT with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, WHICH ARE GOD'S!" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

I almost feel like I hear him saying, didn't you guys understand what God was saying through me in Galatians 2:20?

"I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: nevertheless I live (in other words, I still have physical life); yet not I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith OF the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Are you catching what he's really saying? In other words, salvation was our crucifixion and death. And yes, we still have a physical body that at this point is still alive, but now it is Christ who is actually the One who is doing the living in us, because we're dead! And now it is not even a matter of us living "FOR" Jesus by "OUR" faith! No, Galatians 2:20 says that it isn't even "OUR" faith! Christ living IN and THROUGH us is by the faith "OF" Christ!!! Oh my, what a paradigm shift concerning the Christian life!

That little word "OF" is probably the most significant and telling word of that entire verse! And it isn't just a random word! Do you realize that God uses it every time He addresses the issue of what the Christian life is all about? Check out Philippians 3:9...

"And being found in him, not having MINE OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, which is of the law, but that which is THROUGH THE FAITH 'OF' CHRIST, the righteousness which is of God (the true righteousness) by faith."

Whose faith? YOURS—or Christ's? Well, since we're DEAD and He IS OUR LIFE, and it's Him LIVING in us, it must be HIS!!! He lives the Christian life THROUGH us, not by "OUR" faith—but HIS! The faith "OF" CHRIST!

And how about Romans 3:22???

"Even the righteousness of God (There's that true righteousness again. Not MY RIGHTEOUSNESS, but GOD'S! Listen now...) which is by faith 'OF' Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe!"

Do you see how backwards our thinking can become about the Christian life? I mean, I know it sounds very spiritual to say, "Jesus died for me, and now, by my faith, I am going to live for Him." As spiritual as that may sound, I'm afraid our brother Paul would tell us that it is the very essence of the CARNAL MIND! Oh my, I know that sounds so strong, and so foreign to 21st century "Christianity," but it is the clear teaching of Scripture!

Let me say it as succinctly and as clearly as I know how to say it...The Christian life is not about you LIVING FOR GOD. It is about you recognizing your DEATH, and allowing CHRIST, in all of His fullness, TO LIVE THROUGH YOU! Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:15...

"And that he (Christ) died FOR all, that they which live (have physical life) should not henceforth live UNTO THEMSELVES, but UNTO him (notice, not "FOR," but UNTO"!) which died FOR them, and rose again."

Listen, y'all! This is the essence of Christianity! This is the reality that God keeps working to bring us to! Listen to 2 Corinthians 4:10...

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus (that is, in our physical body), that the LIFE also of JESUS might be made MANIFEST in OUR BODY."

Listen, the New Testament is so consistent about this! I hope you're seeing that! And the reason I'm so passionate about this, is because this is where I think we allow the sorry devil to run us amuck in the Christian life. And here I am several pages into today's study, when the real point I wanted to make, is that Colossians 3 teaches us that when we came to Christ, we became a NEW MAN (or WOMAN).

Not just a man with a new set of values, or a new way of thinking, or a new motivation for living...no! We were made a NEW MAN! Because Christ is now living IN us...and THROUGH us!

And what Colossians 3:1-17 is actually revealing to us, is what the LIFE of CHRIST being lived THROUGH the NEW MAN actually looks like. Then, in 3:18-21, God shows us what the LIFE of Christ being lived THROUGH the NEW MAN looks like in his HOME. Then, in 3:22-4:1, He shows us what the LIFE of CHRIST being lived THROUGH the NEW MAN looks like when he or she goes to WORK.

And I think God is trying to get us to see, that if we really have been made "NEW CREATURES" in Christ—if we really are a NEW MAN or a NEW WOMAN...if we truly are born-again, the proof of it isn't going to be what we are at church. Man, all of us look so spiritual there—praying our prayers, singing the songs, saying "amen," acting all reverent, speaking Christianese, wearing our Christian clothes. And all of that's fine—but it proves nothing! The proof of whether we're really a "NEW MAN," is what we are at HOME—and what we are at WORK! That's where the real "US" comes out! All someone would have to do to find out if we're for real, or to find out whether we're really allowing Christ's life to be lived through us, is talk to our SPOUSE and our CHILDREN, and our BOSS and our CO-WORKERS. (And if you're a teenager reading this, all someone would have to do to figure out what's really happening in and through you spiritually, is talk to your PARENTS and your FRIENDS AT SCHOOL.)

I guess the point I'm trying to get you to see today, is that this whole thing about having "A New Attitude At Work," is first and foremost, about having A New Attitude About What Salvation Is! It's not about us exercising a massive dose of self-discipline, and suppressing what we're really thinking and feeling, and TRYING to be good Christians at work, "displaying" good "Christian" attitudes. Oh my, y'all, it'll just be a matter of time before the flesh gets unbelievably tired of trying to generate "Christ-like" behavior, and will reveal itself for what it really is! (It's amazing how STRONG the flesh can get when it gets TIRED!)

No. We're not our own (1 Cor. 6:20). We don't even have a life to live today (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3). He hasn't called us to live FOR Him. He has called us to "RECKON (to live in the practical reality of our position in Christ) ourselves to be DEAD indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11). And He's called us to "YIELD" ourselves to the reality of our DEATH to SELF, and our LIFE in and through CHRIST (Rom. 6:13)—and allow Him to just be who He is when we go to our jobs today. He wants the "NEW MAN" in us to do our job today. So, let's get out of the way today, and let the RISEN LIFE OF CHRIST in us find its full expression through us!

Four words from Galatians 2:20 sum up, not only the mentality we need to have as we go to work today, but the mentality we need to have for every aspect of the Christian life...

"Not I, but Christ."

Four words from Galatians 5:16 sum it up just as simply and powerfully...

"Walk in the Spirit."

Remember, we don't live like God's people did in the Old Testament. God isn't just on the outside telling us how to live a holy life. He moved on the inside of us, so HE can actually live out that holy life through our body.

Oh, God, help me to get that. Oh, God, help us to get that.

If you have questions and/or comments regarding today's study, please direct correspondence to mtrotter@nwbible.org