

Eternal Reality

Too often today, Christians are looking for their identity in the wrong places. Their state of mind, their happiness is directly related to their environment and circumstances. The problem is that the reality of God has disappeared from their vision. The only reality they are concerned with is the present, what they see. Because of an increased lack of interest in the word of God and spiritual things, many like Esau have sold out, and adapted to their surroundings. They have lost their true sense of destiny, they forget who they really are. They are walking by sight and not by faith.

The scripture declares, "*They (Christians) are not of the world even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*" (John 17:16, 17). If you have been saved by the grace of God, no matter what you think, you no longer belong to this world. If you give yourself wholly to the world, this truth will not change, but you will be living a lie. The lie is not original with you but is borrowed from Satan. The lie is that you can live independently of God. Satan says he doesn't need God for anything; in fact he can do what God has done better. Since Satan has lost the first fight with the Christian, that is the Christian has totally acknowledged his helplessness and depended on God for the saving of his soul, Satan then attacks from another angle. He seeks to discredit the Christian and his testimony. This is the Christian's position, he is "*not of the world,*" but many Christians are absorbed, even preoccupied with only this system of things. How do they express or live this truth?

The Lord then prays for the Christians to be *sanctified*, that is set apart for God, to be used only for God's Holy purposes. Positionally we are *sanctified* (set apart) unto God with reference to our salvation (1Cor 1:2). We belong to God. This is God again working on us from the inside out. He sets us apart unto Himself positionally, then He wants us to walk in the truth of what He has done for us. "*I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*" (Eph 4:1). The exhortation is not to induce Christians to live in order to get eternal life, but to live a life that recognizes the lofty position into which God has already placed them. Our Lord says we are to be set apart "*by the truth; your word is truth.*" In the life of the Christian, he is to be distinguished by means of the truth, bible doctrine. Not that he always carries a bible under his arm, but his thinking is to be different from the system of thinking in the world. By means of truth, bible doctrine he is to conduct his life. With the Holy Spirit indwelling him, setting his body apart unto God, making a temple of it, the Christian is commanded to "*be filled with the*

Spirit" also. Here is the power in the Christian life, the Spirit of truth actually in control of the soul. With the heart of man saturated with bible doctrine (the very thinking of God), and the power provided by the filling of the Spirit, we can "*walk even as he walked.*"

"You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you." (Gal 5:7,8). The race is the Christian life and the Galatians were doing just fine until someone cut them off. What was the attack, physical? The attack was on the truth in their hearts. The enemy came with false doctrines and the Galatians went for them. Here is why bible doctrine must be our number one priority in life. If we neglect doctrine we open ourselves up for false doctrines. We must pay close attention to the word, submitting to its authority over our lives, accepting its wisdom, and knowledge. Without being *rooted and grounded* in the word, Satan will sift us as wheat. To the extent we neglect the word or are disobedient to it, we invite Satanic thinking to gain a foothold in our lives.

As we can see the battleground for our souls is fought in our thinking. The apostle Paul says "*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,*" (what does it mean to conform to this world? the answer is found in the next phrase) "*but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" (Rom 12:2). If you want to avoid being conformed to this world, you must be transformed by the renewing of your mind through consistently taking in bible doctrine. The Christian must be aware that his thinking is constantly being challenged by the system of thinking in the world. There is a certain wisdom of the world, but "*the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.*" (1Cor 3:19). So Christian, be on guard, "*See to it that no one takes you captive (in your thinking) through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*" (Col 2:8). Instead "*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*" (2Cor 10:5).

There is an eternal reality for the Christian.

This eternal reality is spiritual and can only be experienced or understood by the Christian, not the unbeliever (1Cor 2:14). Of course this world presents another reality. Paul describes both realities for us: "*Therefore we do not loose heart (we do not become discouraged). Though outwardly we are wasting away (physically we marching toward the grave), yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day (constantly strengthening the inner man through the thinking of God). For our light and momentary troubles (our short sojourn through this life, with all its trials) are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (although this life may seem difficult, if we fight the good fight, these things pale*

in comparison with the glories of the eternal state God has waiting for us when we arrive home, see also Rom 8:18). *So we fix our eyes* (to fix our eyes is to concentrate and focus our attention) *not on what is seen* (the world, and the thinking of the world), *but on what is unseen* (the unseen spiritual realm, eternal realities). *For what is seen is temporary* (fleeting, just like our momentary troubles, it will not be here for long "*for the world in its present form is passing away*" 1Cor 7:31) *but what is unseen is eternal*" (2Cor 4:16-18). The eternal reality in the spiritual realm is where we should be focusing our attention. The ruler of this world (Satan) is the one who energizes the thinking of the unbelievers, it is his "*spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*" (Eph 2:2). Do not be deceived Christian, this world with all of its attractions and enticements, is evil. There is nothing in this world that is in any way redeemable except one thing--the souls of those unbelievers who are perishing (2Cor 4:4). The Lord has made perfect provision for their escape from the world. The world is not mainly the buildings and establishments, but is the thinking of it's ruler! Never forget that "*we are children of God, and that the whole world* (not some of it, but all the world) *is under the control of* (Satan) *the evil one*" (1John 5:19).

Our Attitude

What then should be the Christian's attitude toward this evil system with which the enemy seeks to neutralize his testimony for God. The direct testimony from scripture is instructive at this point: "*Do not love* (do not be concentrating or occupied with) *the world or anything in the world* (do not become obsessed with material things for "*the earth and everything in it will be burned up*" 2Pet 3:10b). *If anyone loves the world* (if anyone is occupied with this satanic system of thinking in this world), *the love of the Father* (occupation with the thinking from bible doctrine) *is not in him.* *For everything in the world--the cravings of the sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father* (the thinking and desires of the world are opposed to the thinking of bible doctrine) *but from the world.* *The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*" (1John 2:15-17).

Our attitude towards this world system should be separation. Having the wrong perspective can cause the believer to become conformed to the pattern of thinking in the world. If we are living the Christian life (walking by faith), we will be at odds with the world, so "*Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.*" (1John 3:13). Not only will the world not know you or understand you, but will despise you. Remember our Lord says that "*if the world hates you, keep in mind it hated me first.*" (John 15:18). We must choose sides and understand who and what we are, and what is our destiny; for "*don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*" (James 4:4). Have you become a friend of the world? Does the world hate you?

Our Focus

For the Christian there is a spiritual reality based on who and what he is. His attitudes, thoughts, motivations and desires are to be different from world. Paul characterizes it this way: "*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ (and you have through the baptism of the Spirit, which identified you with Christ's death, burial and now you are identified with his resurrection life, see Rom 6:3-8), set your hearts (focus your attention, set your priorities) on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God*" (Col 3:1). Remember, we are only here as ambassadors, sent into a dark world, we do not belong here, this is not our home, "*but our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there*" (Phil 3:20). Understanding who and what we are is essential to our thinking. "*Things above*" refer to spiritual truths, about God, angels, and man contained in the scriptures. This verse gives us an agenda, a destiny that is not of this world. Not only does it tell us who we are (those risen with Christ) but what we are to set our hearts on, that is our thinking. Even though we live down here, we are really in enemy territory. We have a job to do down here and we are sustained by the grace of God to do it. God could take us home at anytime, but Christ prayer "*is not that you (Father) take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.*" (John 17:15). The evil one (Satan) would destroy us if he could for, "*Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*" (1Pet 5:8).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven right now seated at the right hand of God. The glorified humanity of Christ, who is the head of the body (us), here on earth is in the highest place of honor in the entire universe. We (church age believers) are in union with the celebrity of the universe, the King of kings, Lord of lords, we are eternally united to Him or "*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself?*" (1Cor 5:15). Yes, we are the eternal bride of the Lord in a special relationship. We are the body, He is the head, we are "*bone of his bone flesh of his flesh.*" Now, the body does not think or act on its own initiative, but is under orders from the head. If we are in fellowship, filled with the Spirit, our hearts saturated with the thinking of Christ, we can truly function as His body in this "*crooked and depraved generation.*" (Phil 2:15b).

God's Interests/Our Interests

Setting our hearts on things above also expresses the idea that God has a plan, not just about our lives in particular, but that we are part of a greater plan. As we are not given every detail of this plan we certainly have our instructions in writing. There is a conflict raging, called the angelic conflict, "*for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers of this dark*

world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph 6:12). Satan, who is the ruler of this world, has amassed and organized great spiritual forces of super creatures called angels. This is a spiritual warfare we are involved in, and it has very definite rules. Satan has been allowed to demonstrate his great claims in Isaiah 14:13, 14, known as the five "*I will*" statements. Well, he has been given a chance to rule, but what a sorry ruler he has turned out to be, just look around, this world is a mess! He is only being allowed to rule for a time until our Lord comes at the Second Advent and has him thrown into the Abyss (Rev 20:1-3). Christ then will set up His rule on the earth (1000 yrs) in perfect environment. In all this, God will allow Satan to demonstrate to everyone (mankind and angels), that he is totally evil and wrong and deserving of the lake of fire that was prepared for him and his angels before the creation of man (Matt 25:41). Satan is thrown into the lake of fire at the end of human history along with all those who side with him (Rev 20:10). God is vindicated as wholly righteous and just and even more is known of God's gracious and loving character than before. We find these words in scripture, "*And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*" (Eph 2:6,7).

Since we belong to God, then God's interests are our interests; what is important to God should be important to us. We should know that our lives are on display for all the angelic creation to see. They are watching and learning more and more about this infinite, holy, sovereign, and eternal God of the universe through us, the church (Eph 3:10). Possibly billions of angels are watching us because God is using us to demonstrate the perfection of His integrity in His dealing with creatures. We cannot see these angels, they are invisible to us--but real! In Luke 15:7-10, among the angels, there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who changes his mind about Christ. Angels closely watched Jesus Christ at the incarnation (1Tim 3:16), and watched through the temptation, and through to the crucifixion where He was judged for the sins of the world. We should be aware of this greater reality that exists and live our lives in light of it. The angelic conflict is such a detailed subject we will have to devote an entire discourse at a later time to properly paint the picture. The long and short of it is that our testimony goes far beyond what we see. We have been highly honored by God to be used in accomplishing His great and eternal purposes. We are on display for a myriad of angels, note the following scriptures in this regard: 1Cor 4:9; 11:10; Eph 3:10; 1Tim 5:21; 1Pet 1:12. These scriptures give us insight into the eternal reality.

"Set your minds on things above not on things earthly things" (Col 3:2). Unfortunately, there are always casualties in warfare. Those who don't heed the commands of God are used by Satan to advance his purposes. Certainly if you

belong to God you are eternally saved and cannot possibly lose your salvation, but if you get involved in this evil system you should *"watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully."* (2John 8). At the judgment seat of Christ the believers works will be judged and anyone who builds with *"wood, hay and straw"* their works are burned up and they receive no rewards (1Cor 3:11-15), but their salvation is intact because they have the foundation of Jesus Christ. Let us note some characteristics of these believers who have unquestionably neglected, forsaken and abandoned bible doctrine. From the apostle Paul, *"For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears* (Paul had constantly warned against this type of revisionism, and was very passionate about these loved ones), *many live as enemies of the cross of Christ* (in the manner they conduct themselves, Satan is using them for his purposes to turn people away from Christ). *Their destiny is destruction* (the sin unto death, they are casualties, God removes them from the battlefield with no reward for service), *their god is their stomach* (they are ruled by their emotions, how they feel, what seems right), *and their glory is in their shame* (at the judgment seat, the very things they think will bring them glory, only bring shame). *Their mind is on earthly things"* (Phil 3:18, 19). Instead of spiritual realities directing their thoughts, temporal and fleeting earthly things take precedence in their lives. They forget they were bought with a great price; they disregard the awesome sacrifice by our Lord on their behalf and all the marvelous provisions of grace so costly to God, but free to them. They have allowed the interests and desires of this world to become their interests and desires. They live lives that are miserable and full of divine discipline, until one day after God has given them equal privilege and opportunity to fulfill His plan, He in discipline brings them home. They have lived lives that are a disgraceful and shameful and will one day stand before the judgment seat to give an account of themselves.

Distraction and Reaction

For the Christian who is fulfilling the mandate to *"grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,"* who has set his heart on the eternal realities, Paul has a warning for you, *"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned.* (your position, your focus on the eternal realities found in the word will be challenged by those who have customs, traditions, and teachings not in accordance with sound bible doctrine, be alert!) *Keep away from them* (do not associate with them, do allow them to become your personal friends 1Cor 15:33). *For such people are not serving our Lord Christ* (we serve Christ with humility, out of love from the Spirit, who is renewing our minds with Christ's thinking, and a willing desire to constantly know more and more of Him and so it makes sense that *"if anyone loves me he will obey my teaching...he who does not love me will not obey my teaching"* John 14:23, 24. They are not concerned with

serving Christ in humility), *but their own appetites* (they serve or submit to their emotions, just like those who's god was their emotions in the previous verse. They associate their emotions with God, how they feel determines whether God is blessing or judging them. When they are emotionally charged they say that feeling is the "Holy Ghost." We cannot serve God with our emotions, for they cannot think, reason, solve problems or apply bible doctrine to life circumstances. Emotions are only designed to be responsive to what we think; they are NEVER to be the motivations for what we think. The motivation for what we think comes from bible doctrine residing in the heart. These Christians have distorted the role of the emotions in life, do not be deceived by them!).

"By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people" (Rom 16:17, 18). Since they has forsaken doctrine as their only rule and practice and accepted emotion as the criterion of the Christian life, they use emotion to snare their new converts. In place of bible doctrine is *"smooth talk"* which means in context, compelling emotional appeals. They also use *"flattery"* which is simply not telling them the truth, but only what they want to hear. The result is that *"naive"* people with little or no doctrine are deceived. These are people who are more concerned with how something is said, rather than, is it accurate and in line with sound doctrine.

Paul instructed Timothy to *"Preach the word; be prepared in and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction."* (2Tim 4:2). Today, there is a trend in many churches tending towards entertainment. People come to church to become emotionally charged, stimulated, excited and amused. Then, the Holy Spirit who is God, is charged with causing people to act in this manner. These great manifestations of emotional display, shouting, crying, uncontrolled body movements, uncontrollable laughter, and uncontrolled utterances (alleged tongues), are all attributed to God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth or doctrine, is responsible for teaching our spirits the will, purpose and plan of God. Perhaps this is what Paul meant when in chapter three he said they would be *"lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."* That is why Paul instructed Timothy to preach the word, that is the responsibility of the minister, not to be a stand up comic, or the leader of a pep-rally, but to teach with *"great patience and careful instruction."* Paul is telling Timothy not to give in to them for a minute, but to preach the word *"in season,"* when it is appropriate, and *"out of season,"* when it doesn't seem appropriate.

This next phrase is tragic but true, *"For the time will come* (and is certainly here now) *when men will not put up with sound doctrine* (you would think, if there was anywhere doctrine would be outlawed, it would never be among God's people! Because of emotional living, sound doctrine has become strange and to some even

foolishness. They will not endure, put up with, stand for, they refuse to listen to and will not tolerate sound doctrine). *Instead, to suite their desires* (false motivations from emotion and human viewpoint) *they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear* (arrogance is dissociation from reality and therefore gives in to flattery as we saw in a previous verse. Sad indeed are those believers, they think they are spiritual, serving the Lord, but even worse, they lock themselves into this because they will only call teachers to their churches who say things they want to hear) *they will turn their ears away from the truth* (they reject the truth, will not waste their time listening) *and turn aside to myths*" (2Tim 4:3-5). When the truth is rejected, nothing but Satan's schemes and the realities of this world are left. Therefore, "*those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance* (a change of mind) *leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*" (2Tim 2:25, 26). This is our prayer for them.

More Thoughts on Emotion.

After having written what some may perceive as negative about emotion, I will surely be accused of being against all emotion. This is not the case. As Christians, we are not emotionless. For instance, take notice of Paul's words about those who have emotion as their god, they are NOT living the normal Christian life; but Paul was not devoid of emotion himself, for in the previous verse he was "*in tears*" about their situation. There is nothing wrong with the Christian expressing his emotions, and it is often appropriate. For we are told to "*rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn*" (Rom 12:15). This is not a saying we should be phonies, but we must have the right mental attitude to rejoice or mourn. Emotion is a function of the soul, it is real and it is a part of our makeup, it gives color to our personality. Everyone has emotion at varying degrees, not one of us should be the pattern of emotion for another, for we are all different. I reject the notion that someone who is more emotional in a worship service is more spiritual than someone who is not. Enthusiasm and a sense of humor are normal, but not necessarily spiritual. Normal emotion does not determine spirituality, but what does? You are spiritual if God the Holy Spirit is in control of the your soul, and NOT the sin nature. Spirituality is an absolute state for the Christian, either he is filled with the Spirit, or he is not.

Emotions are to be subordinate to what we think, this is normal. We are to govern our lives by what we think, i.e. bible doctrine, not emotion. The examples given in the scriptures are the abnormal function of emotion controlling the soul. These believers were ordering their lives by emotions, and bible doctrine was neglected and shunned. They look at emotional reactions in the soul as God inspired, they say "I am crying, this is God making me cry, I am laughing, this is

God making me laugh, I can really feel God!" Emotions are real, they actually cause physical and chemical reactions in the body, they are felt. When these feelings are said to be God by those who are zealous, they make them the criterion of the Christian life. They (emotions) are sought out, encouraged as godliness, instead of bible doctrine being taught at the 11:00 hour, they search out teachers who will inspire in them these emotions. When they are at an emotional pitch, they feel God is very near to them and blessing them. God the Holy Spirit does not make you FEEL a certain way, He influences you to THINK a certain way. Anybody can express emotion, but only the Christian who is filled with the Spirit can think and apply bible doctrine to his life. Abnormal emotion causes believers to loose focus of God's eternal reality found in the word, it causes them to be worldly, more in touch with earthly things; they become blinded to that which is unseen and eternally valuable. Abnormal emotion needs to be understood because it is an attack on bible doctrine (see also 2Cor 6:11, 12), it is an issue in the angelic conflict and many Christians are becoming casualties through this diversion. Let us seek to place emotions where they belong in the Christian life.

Something New

Every now and then, we hear of some scientist in a remote area discovering a new species of some insect or plant. Oftentimes, what he discovers is given his name because it had no name, and why not give some credit to the one who made the discovery. We know it is not a "new" species for Solomon said "*there is nothing new under the sun.*" It just took this long for man to discover it; and man will continue to find out more and more about God's creation. However, there is one exception to what Solomon said; God did create a brand new species and the bible does not contradict itself. We need to understand about this new species because it is directly related to WHO we are. No scientist will discover this new species, but God has revealed it through the Spirit to only the spiritual man. Before we examine the properties of the new species, we should note that it is not new or an after thought to God, He always knew about it, but Solomon did not. Therefore, it is said to be a "*mystery*" hidden in God from eternity past. It was hidden from all Old Testament believers, so there is no need to look into anything written by them. For more information and documentation on the mystery, see "Introduction to the Mystery Doctrine."

We are the new species! "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone the new has come!*" (2Cor 5:17). First we should be sure of what Paul is saying. There are two words for "new" in Greek, both translated "new" in the New Testament. The **first** is νεος (NEOS) as it appears in Greek. Thayer says, "neos denotes the new primarily in reference to time, the young, recent." We might understand this like a "new" baby, or a "new" car. The **second** is καινος (KAINOS) and again from Thayer, with reference to substance,

"of a new kind; unprecedented, novel, uncommon, unheard of, given now for the first time." "When kainos is used with κτισις (KTISIS, creation) Gal 6:15; 2Cor 5:17; All things are new, previously non-existent, begin to be far different than what they were before." Quotes from Thayer Greek-English Lexicon. In the passages we will consider, "kainos" is the Greek word chosen by the apostle. So then neos is new with reference to time, where kainos is new with reference to species, unprecedented, of a new kind. The designation "*in Christ*" is a technical term Paul uses to denote believers living in this mystery age. The time or age we live in is unique and we ourselves are unique.

Christians are Unique

Christian's are a new creation in Christ. There is no such thing as a Christian not "*in Christ*." There was a new racial creation by God called the Jew. The rest of humanity are all classified as "*Gentiles*" in the scriptures. There were Gentiles before Abraham, who was the first Jew in history, and Gentiles will continue in to the end of human history. There are many categories within the Gentiles, many races of people, all lumped together in the bible under the one heading, "*Gentile*." The Jewish line starts with Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob and then Jacob's sons, know as the 12 tribes (really 13). I know someone may say "I'm Irish" or "I'm African" but we are not dealing with how we see it, but God's viewpoint. This is not to say that God does not recognize the distinct races within the Gentiles, He does and so the bible does. God gives us three basic categories of humanity, Paul says "*do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews* (the new racial creation from Abraham), *Greeks* (he uses Greeks as representative of all Gentiles), *or the church of God* (those in the body of Christ) *even as I try to please everybody* (these three categories make up everybody in the world) *in every way. For I am not seeking my own good* (we are not here to promote our own interests) *but the good of many* (all unbelievers in the Jew and Gentile category), *so that they may be saved* (once saved they are in Christ). *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.* (1Cor 10:32--11:1). This is why we are here, and also the correct attitude about those in the other two categories, do you have this attitude?

How do you gain entrance into the body or Church? "*For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks* (doesn't matter what category of humanity you belonged to), *slave or free* (social distinctions don't matter either), *and we were all given one Spirit to drink*" (1Cor 12:13). Entrance into the body is by the baptism of the Spirit which occurs at the moment anyone believes in Jesus Christ for salvation. The same thing happens to the Jew in this age, that happens to the Gentile, the rich or poor, the social outcast or the elite, the slave or freeman, when anyone believes in Christ, God the Holy Spirit places them in the body of Christ. There is a change of the person who is in Christ, this change is the "*new*" person God has made. The changes are many but we will note a few that

relate to who we are, and from where we came. *"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew or Greek (you may have been a Jew or Gentile, but not any more! We must now learn to look at ourselves from this reality) slave nor free, male nor female (no sexual distinction in Christ, meaning both male or female have equal privilege and opportunity to fulfill God's plan for their lives; this does not mean God has no system of authority in the body; this does not mean that the husband is not in authority over the wife 1Cor 11:3; Eph 5:23. God the Holy Spirit gives differing gifts within the body, we don't choose for "he gives them to each one, just as he determines 1Cor 12:11. Although the man and woman may have different gifts they are equally important in the body and to the body, see 1Cor 12-14) for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal 3:26-29). If you are in Christ, this is your true identity, do you really believe it?

What does it all mean?

How are we to look at ourselves in the light of this truth? *"Neither circumcision (being a Jew) or uncircumcision (being a Gentile) means anything (for the one in Christ, these distinctions are not the eternal reality, but the reality of this world, they have absolutely no significance), what counts is a new creation."* (Gal 6:15). What is important to the Christian is the eternal reality of the new creation in Christ, this is where our focus, our emphasis should be as long as we are in this world. There are many racial issues of today, just as there were in the time these passages were penned. Our responsibility as Christians is to live our lives depending upon the truth about these issues. We are not to allow the world to dictate to us a reality that is not according to the word. We know who we are and where we are from, *"the world does not know us..."* Since the world does not know us, we cannot allow them tell us who and what we are, or what to think about ourselves. Of course we must learn about ourselves, we must renew our minds so that *"we too may live the new life"* (Rom 6:4). The new (kainos) life is different from anything we could have ever imagined, it is a supernatural life, the same life that our Lord is living in heaven, the resurrection life. Since we are His body, our attitude should be *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live (by the Spirit we are identified with Christ in His death, the person we were in our old Adamic nature is dead), but Christ lives in me (the indwelling of Christ). The life I live in the body, I live by faith (dependence on the thinking of Jesus, found in the epistles, the mystery doctrine) in the Son of God..."* (Gal 2:19, 20).

More Distraction and Reaction

In the time in which we live, racial prejudice has become popular. This is not a new subject for it has been around just about as long as the old sin nature. In bible times we find there were problems, so we should expect God to address this subject. We have an example of the apostle Peter in Antioch actually showing

racial prejudice! Paul braced Peter, he said "*I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.*" This happened sometime after Peter's experience with the Gentiles in Acts 10, for Paul was not saved then, but we see God had to deal more with Peter on this subject. We see Peter was slow to learn, not unlike many of us. Peter had already learned the lesson in Acts 11:17, and he knew it was all right to "*eat with the Gentiles.*" But he was afraid, he caved in to the pressure of racial prejudice when some Christians, who thought it still was important that they were Jews by birth, came to Antioch. Peter "*began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles...*" Peter was a respected leader in the church, he had an opportunity here to be a witness to the truth about racial prejudice, but "*he was afraid.*" As a result of his failure, "*the other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.*" Peter's hypocrisy was that he knew the truth, but refused to live it for fear of what some Christians, who were divorced from reality, might think of him. Even Barnabas! It seems that Paul was a bit surprised the way he mentioned Barnabas. Our living the truth is more important than we think, people are watching and so are angels. It is easy for us to sit back and say "what a terrible thing Peter did, how could he have done that?" Peter had his problems, but he was a great believer, a mature believer that God used in a mighty way, Peter was a winner, he overcame racial prejudice. The Spirit of truth had these words recorded for US, now its our turn, the baton has been passed to us. Are you living according to the truth, or in hypocrisy about racial prejudice? Are you caving in to fear? Paul said "*when I saw they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel...*" (see Gal 2:11-14). When Paul saw how destructive this was, he acted immediately; he confronted Peter "*in front of them all.*" Are you living with racial prejudice? Is your walk in line with the truth of the gospel? As we read these verses in Galatians two, we see they had problems, but thank God for Paul. He used divine viewpoint to defeat human viewpoint.

Paul gives us his attitude about his life, before and after salvation in Philippians 3:2-17. I think it is important to see the correct attitude, you read all the verses, we will deal with the pertinent passages. "*Watch out for those dogs (unbelieving Jews), those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh (they think that their circumcision is a relationship with God). For it is we who are the circumcision (not literal but spiritual circumcision of the heart, see Col 2:11, 12; Rom 6:3-7), we who worship by the Spirit of God (this is the only true worship, by means of the Spirit), who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh (in the flesh here refers to what we were before we were saved, Jew or Gentile, black or white), though I myself have reasons for such confidence (as far as the world is concerned, Paul was somebody before he met Christ). If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh (if anyone else wants to make a big deal of who and what they were before salvation, and begins to give you reasons for their*

thinking this way), *I have more* (Paul's gives his worldly resume): *circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*" Impressive indeed, but to who?

As I look at many Christians today, they haven't understood these words and why Paul penned them. They go through this world making sure everybody around them knows they are Jew or Gentile, Asian or Indian, black or white, etc... They develop in their thinking superiority or inferiority complexes and they only look at other people in terms of these distinctions of the flesh. How superficial, they are blind to the truth! They are walking by sight, preoccupied with "*what is seen.*" But let's get back to the solution Paul gives for these wrong attitudes. "*But whatever was to my profit (whatever I, or others thought or considered great as an unbeliever) I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish.*" When considering the status, the rights and privileges he had because of who and what he was, he doesn't consider it profitable compared to Christ. In this world what race you were born in or the color of your skin or those accomplishments may mean something, but in Christ they mean nothing! Paul's thinking had changed to reflect the eternal realities; and this is written so that we may adjust our thinking. In fact, he now considers "*everything a loss*" when compared to what is in Christ. Further, he considers them "*rubbish*" which means literally excrement, or the KJVs rendering "*dung.*" I don't know anybody who regards or holds in high esteem excrement as anything but refuse! Paul had the right attitude, we have a new destiny, a new identity, a new purpose for living and new priorities in life. God has a plan for our lives, fantastic and enduring wealth is ours and as far as wisdom is concerned, in Christ is "*hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments*" (Col 2:3, 4). So press on, believe me God has your best interests in mind, you can trust Him; he has a life far beyond your most vivid imaginations in view for you. "*Forgetting what is behind (disregard past failures and sins, past accomplishments in the flesh, your race your skin color, anything that is clouding your view of the eternal realities God has for you) and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*"

Our Purpose

We are here in this dark world for the purpose of lifting up our Lord who is the light of the world. Notice Paul's attitude in 1Corinthians 9: 19-23, "*Though I am free I belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews...to those not having*

the law, I became like one not having the law...so as to win those not having the law. To the weak, I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings." The words of Jesus are still true today "*the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few*" (Luke 10:2).

After constantly being told what is wrong, what is right? How are we to conduct ourselves in this world? The bible is full of exhortation and admonition, here is just a portion: "*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written; 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary; 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment upon themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing."* (Rom 12:9--13:4).

Can You See?

I feel like the writer of Hebrews when he says "*and what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets...*" (Heb 11:32). Much more could be said, but my prayer for you is that same prayer Elisha prayed, "*O LORD, open his eyes so he may see. Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*" (2Kings 6:17). Hopefully, your eyes are beginning to open up to the eternal reality and "the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace" as the hymn goes. This discourse is just a glimpse into the eternal realities and the spiritual life of the

Christian. We need to be zealous for the things of God, we need that fire within us that keeps our minds on heavenly themes. I would like to end with something that J. C. Ryle wrote about the heart of the man zealous for God: "It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing; and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives, or whether he dies--whether he has health or whether he has sickness--whether he is rich or whether he is poor--whether he pleases man or whether he gives offense--whether he is thought wise or whether he is thought foolish--whether he gets blame or whether he gets praise-- whether he gets honor or whether he gets shame--for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all, he burns for one thing; and that one thing is to please God, and to advance God's glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it--he is content. He feels that, like a lamp, he is made to burn; and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God has appointed him." (Practical Religion, 1959 ed., p.130).

Douglas E. Presley 10-31-95