

The Wednesday Word, October 30, 2024: The Gospel and the New Creature in Christ. Part

3

Closeness to God always makes a person feel undone. Consider Abraham! The Lord had just told him He was about to incinerate Sodom and Gomorrah. He'd had enough of their wickedness and now stood ready to vaporize the whole vile mess. Abraham's reply is astonishing: He says, "Lord, I've talked to You and I'm already incinerated." Actually, what he said was, "I am dust and ashes" but it's the same thing. (Genesis 18:27). Abraham had drawn close to God and had encountered true holiness: as a result, he felt as vile as the people of the doomed cities. He felt the same judgment they were about to receive was due to him.

Consider also Job and his miserable comforters.

Remember Job? He was afflicted with a plague of Sabeans, a plague of Chaldeans, a plague of wicked weather and because of these things he lost everything. Then he endured a plague of boils, the plague of a nagging wife and then finally the plague of well-meaning friends who just had no clue about what was really happening. These friends argued with the pitiable man that his afflictions must have been a result of sin in his life. He'd been bad to the widows or some such thing they reasoned. But each time they attacked, Job launched a stout and robust defence. After all, he was, he argued, a God fearing and good man who had walked uprightly. But then God showed up! This changed Job's tune! Check it out in Job 40:4 where Job admits to the Lord, "Behold I am vile". His friends couldn't get him to admit this, but now confronted with the very presence of the Almighty he sees that his own righteousness was non-existent compared to the Lord's.

And then remember Isaiah? He was the great woe preacher of his day. His favourite text was, "Woe unto you". He dealt out woes saying, "Woe unto this one and woe unto that one." But one morning, Isaiah went to the Temple and there he encountered the Lord. The Seraphim were declaring, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory". Isaiah took in the scene and immediately declared, "Woe is me, I am undone. What had happened? The 'woe to this one and woe to that one' preacher had changed his tune. It was now, 'Woe unto me!' What had happened? What was the reason for this outburst? The reason was that nearness to God had made Him feel undone!

The truth is, holy people never feel holy and people who feel holy are never holy people. The closer we get to God the more keenly we are aware of our own depths of depravity. The closer we get to God the more we discover that sin is a much bigger issue that we first thought. At the start, for me, it was just a matter of cleaning up the external actions, but now, as the Holy Spirit led, I could see that sin ran like a deep cancer. I love the quote from Mason at the beginning of Part One of this piece—it's worth reading again. "*A holy man is so far acquainted with the corruption of his own heart that instead of condemning others, he is apt to account them better than himself. The imperfections of a believer's sanctification make him continually depend on Christ for his justification.*" I have found this truth to be very real. I am so sinful that sometimes I don't even realize that I'm sinful.

Even the act of preaching can be a time of gross and vile sinfulness for me. You see, many times I find myself in competition with the Lord Jesus for who gets the glory in the sermon. Will it be Jesus or me? This has been a huge struggle! The difficulty is my orphaned heart wants everyone to like me and wants them to think I am a great preacher. Not being satisfied with the acceptance of Christ alone I crave the applause of strangers. That, my friend is refusal to believe the gospel ... it is wickedness of the highest order. In addition, how dare I use the Lord's pulpit and the Lord's message to carve out my own fan club! So what if my listeners like me? Am I here to glorify the Lord or myself? ... And then the Holy Spirit reminds me that if I seek to please men I am not the servant of Christ! And thus, the struggle with sin intensifies and even more so as I grow closer to the Lord.

So where does this leave the scripture, "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold all things are become new?*" Why it leaves it exactly where it should be! But is it true? Yes, it's precisely true! But what does it mean? It means exactly what it says! It says, if any man be "IN CHRIST" ... that's the key, that's where the new creation lies! It is only in Christ that the old has passed away and ALL has become new.

In Christ, I am totally, fully and perfectly righteous...that's new.

The old sinful me, "in Adam", has passed away. When I was "in Adam" I was a stranger to God but now "in Christ" I've been brought near...that's new!

In Christ the orphan has now been adopted ... that's new!

I was once God's enemy but now **in Christ** I've been reconciled, that's new.

In Christ the lost has been found, that's new.

In Christ, the slave has been bought back, that's new.

In Christ, the captive has been liberated and all because of the finished work of one man, the God-man, Jesus the Christ, who loved me and gave Himself for me! The truth is this, as a result and benefit of the gospel, I am a brand-new creature in Christ. My status before God has been changed. I have a new righteousness which is totally outside of me in Christ. His righteousness is now mine and I am in Him. The place where all things are new is not in me, but in Christ.

And that's the Gospel Truth!