

The Finished Work of Christ

The longer we walk in the Christian journey, the more desperate we become for that which satisfies, frees, and gives us peace. One of my favorite questions for people is this; “being totally honest, is there any way in which you are disappointed with Christianity as you know it?” Many of course refuse to admit that they are disappointed, but mainly a few brave souls raise their hand and admit that Christianity to them has been a hardship, lacking in peace, tranquility, rest, and joy. Why is this? Is it because of striving, faulty beliefs, false teaching, corrupted concepts of God, etc. Most assuredly it is, but also because of not understanding the finished Work of Christ.

The Finished Victory

One of the ways in which the finished Work of Christ is minimized has to do with conquering the devil and all his ways. Christians today have no problem believing that Christ has provided the solution for sin in terms of forgiveness, but it is quite another matter to believe that the believer has no role in helping God gain victory over temptations, or “besetting sins” as the ancients liked to call them. At least he pleads; “I need to allow Christ to conquer my addictions, lusts, and sinful passions through me.” This reasoning seems so right, however, it is so wrong!

When Christ assumed our death, he not only bore our sins in his body on the tree, but he died to sin (that is, he died to Satan’s power). Romans 6:10 reads, “For the death He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, He lives to God.” The point of this is that His way of dealing with temptation from Satan, the world, and from sin as a power was to die to them. The only way to understand the word “sin” in Romans 6 is to understand that it’s referencing power, not a deed. In this way these three nemeses lost their power. Of course the benefit to us is that the death He died to sin, means we died also. This is not teaching that we died to our sins, but rather that we died to Satan, the world, and to sin as a power just or certainly as He did. Romans 6:11, “likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Now if Christ’s way of dealing with temptation was to die to it, and to include us in His death, what makes us think that we can have an alternate way of dealing with temptation by striving, scratching and clawing, groaning and moaning to overcome it as though victory is something we achieve due to Christ’s

failure to overcome it. This is blasphemy! It is a denial of the finished Work of Christ!

Not only did the enemy lose his power over us when we died to him, (he did not lose his power, but simply his power over us), but we came alive through His resurrected life, and the life we now live by faith, is already victorious over our enemies. This in no way implies that Satan does not have power to persecute and oppress Christians. Indeed, many have become martyrs. It says rather that he lost his power to make us sin. If we sin, we choose to sin! It is not that we are not able to sin; it is rather that we are able not to sin! Our life in Christ does not become more victorious, no it is already victorious, and my striving will do nothing to make it more powerful or more victorious than it is, but you say, I don't feel like I'm victorious nor do I have a track record of demonstrating victory. Thank you my friend for exposing your thinking, I now know that you choose to not live by faith, but by sight. The victorious life of Christ is not subject to proving His victory by your feelings, nor is He interested in your need to confirm His power by your track record. You have need to look only at the Scriptures which tell of the finished Work of Christ to find out what is true about your relationship to Satan, sin, and the world.

As Bill Freeman wrote in the last three issues of the Exchanged Life newsletter, your relationship to your enemies is the same relationship that Christ has to them. Look away from yourself, and evaluate what is true and what is possible by your identity in Christ!

Before we look at another aspect of the finished work of Christ, let us also note that we are in a victorious place. Being seated with Christ in the heavenlies, we are "far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come." Ephesians 1:21. Ephesians 2:6 adds that He "raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Look at yourself up there! Would you say we are in victory at His right hand, or that we are gradually becoming more victorious as we strive to conquer sin? You see, my friend, to pray for victory over temptation is an affront to the finished Work of Christ. To pray for more power or strength, is to minimize the gift of resurrection life we already possess. To believe that I can add to the victory Christ accomplished at Calvary is to deny His triumph and to make myself the conquering hero instead of Him.

How dare I!!

The Finished Identity

Anyone who has read this newsletter over time or who knows the teachings of Exchanged Life Ministries knows that we believe and teach the fact that the Scriptures teach a fixed, finished identity for the Christian. What does this mean? Let us look first at what it does not mean. Have you heard the popular teaching that we must become more and more like Jesus. It is usually based on Romans 8:29, "For those He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Certainly the Scriptures teach that all believers have a pre-destiny, to be conformed to the image of His son. The issue I raise however, has to do with how this conforming is to take place. Will it take place by our acting like Jesus? Will it take place by changing our behavior so we quit embarrassing the Savior? Do you notice how quickly we turn to our part rather than first checking out the finished Work of Christ? We read something very similar in Ephesians 1. In verse three, Paul writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the beloved." Did you notice that this choosing has nothing to do with heaven or hell (or many think), but rather it has to do with choosing us (all Christians) in Him that we should be holy and blameless before Him...? Now I ask a very simple question. If God has made us holy and blameless by placing us in Christ Jesus, then how are we to become more like Jesus by the try harder method? Furthermore, if he chose this plan of placing us in Christ Jesus (before the foundation of the world) in order to make us accepted (past tense) in the beloved, can we become even more like Christ and thus make ourselves even more acceptable to Him by human effort? Again, we are minimizing the finished Work of Christ. The fact is that God has joined us in Christ and given us a fixed identity in Him. The method of conforming us to Christ had to do with God's work. We can in no way conform ourselves to the image of Christ. Rather, we are to discover who we already are in Him. As we discover who

We already are, our behavior will change, out of gratitude, thanksgiving, and joy.

God always had a plan to join us to Christ. The first plan was to join us to Christ by allowing us to eat of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. When we failed to take advantage of this plan, God gave us another chance. This plan of joining us to Christ succeeded (i.e. for those who accepted the offer). The chosen plan has always been to join us to Christ and in this way make us acceptable to Himself, holy and without blemish.

It all has to do with the finished Work of Christ! It is a plan that is sufficient, or do we think we can make ourselves holy and without blemish by the time we die by good works? God forbid!!

* All scriptures taken from the New King James Version