

## A CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians might well be titled "Living a Christ-Centered Life". It's a short epistle (only four chapters), but in this beautiful epistle Paul shows how that Christ is the very heart and core of the Christian's life. If we are "in Christ" and Christ is in us, we have access to every spiritual blessing which God intends for His people today. Or, as Paul expresses it in Col. 2:10, "*Ye are complete in him.*"

Whenever you find a professing Christian who is unhappy, or who feels incomplete, or who is unfruitful in righteousness, you can mark it down that he is not living a "Christ-centered" life. Some Christians I know look too much to the church and expect the church to fulfill their very spiritual need. The church of course is the body of Christ, but it is not the source of spiritual life and power; it is but the reflection or extension of that power. The source of spiritual life and power is Christ!

There are others who lean on their own wisdom and knowledge for spiritual life. But human wisdom is vain and deceptive and spiritually bankrupt. "*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness*" (1 Cor. 3:19). And knowledge, even if it be derived from Scripture, can be very unsatisfying unless one's heart and life is wholly committed to Jesus Christ, "*in whom,*" Paul says, "*are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (Col. 2:3).

Even an atheist might read the New Testament and know a lot about Christ (history, facts, etc.), but knowing about Christ and knowing Him are two different things! I have met some in the church whose minds are filled with Biblical knowledge and facts, but their hearts are cold and empty because Christ is not the center and motivating force of their daily lives. This reminds us of what Jesus told some of the Jews in John 5:39, 40: "*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*"

And then, there are still others who think that they can find spiritual life in religious activities and a multitude of good works. But this route can also prove very vain and illusive. One can "go through all the motions" of worship and every good work prescribed in Scripture - but, without Christ, all is empty and vain. With Christ, however, every religious act is meaningful and edifying and fulfilling.

In view of these things, we need to stop and very seriously ask - What does it mean to live a Christ-centered life?

First of all, we need to realize that Jesus is the leader of His disciples. He is not merely "the Head of the Church" in an executive kind of capacity, like our President is the executive of our nation. The church is not merely an institution with a Chief Executive sitting far off somewhere, handing down decrees. Rather, the Scriptures present Christ as the Head of his spiritual body, the church, and His life flows throughout the body to each individual member. The church, the body of Christ, is not a mere organization but a living organism. Every member of this body of Christ must be vitally connected to Him who is the living Head and Savior.

Jesus never commanded us to follow something or someone else. His command is, "*Follow me*" (Matt. 16:24). To be like Jesus, we must of necessity follow Him, and be like Him, letting Him be our pattern in all that we do.

Secondly, we must always remember that Jesus is the theme of New Testament preaching. In that first Gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost, the spirit-empowered apostles preached Christ. As a result of that powerful message, some three thousand souls were "*pricked in their heart*" and moved to obey the Gospel by repenting of sin and being baptized into Christ for the remission of sin (Acts 2:37,38).

In Acts 4, we find Peter and John preaching boldly in the name of Christ. Then, in Acts 8 we read of Philip preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. As soon as this man heard the message of Jesus, he wanted to be baptized immediately. They stopped the chariot in which they were riding, got out, went down in to the water, and Philip baptized him into Christ. The Ethiopian "*went on his way rejoicing*" (Acts 8:26-39).

We have a lot of people today who balk or quibble about Christ's command to be baptized. Some will say, "It's alright to be baptized, but it isn't necessary." And some will even ridicule and make light of baptism altogether. Whenever such attitudes are expressed, you can mark it down that those who thus speak have a "faith problem."

In the first century, we find that those hearing the Gospel and gladly receiving it were eager to obey Christ in baptism immediately, the same hour of the day or night. Anyone who is not likewise eager to obey Christ in this regard today has been influenced by false teaching and is not yet convicted of the true message and love of Jesus!

And yet, we must not only be "*baptized into Christ*," as the New Testament teaches (Gal. 3:27), but we must also come forth to "*walk in newness of life*" (Rom. 6:4).

When a person repents and "dies to the old life", is buried with Christ in baptism, and is raised up a new creature, his entire value-system and outlook is changed. He is converted, born anew! No longer does he live for earthly or material things, but his affections are transferred to Christ and heavenly things. He knows that this world is passing away, and that earthly treasures offer no real or lasting security.

The life which we now live here, even if it should be 100 years, is but a moment in comparison with eternity. The Christian's goal and hope, therefore, are to be found in Christ at His coming, and to be able to spend eternity with Him in the heavenly home.

Finally, living a Christ-centered life means that we look continually to Jesus as the only sustaining source for a life that is spiritual and productive.

In Hebrews 12:1-2, the writer likens the Christian's life to the running of a foot-race. In order to run this race successfully to the finish, we must do two things. First we must lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and second, we must look continually to Jesus as our help and sustainer, for He is the author and finisher of our faith.

Anything which might hinder, or hold us back, must be cast aside. For some, this might be involvement in a worldly amusement which is frequently allowed to come between them and the Lord's service. For others, it might be a habit which cripples their Christian influence and spiritual growth. And for some, it might mean the giving up of a close friendship or association which is pulling them away from the Lord and weakening them as a Christian.

Whatever it is - if it is a "weight" which holds you back and keeps you from running the best race possible - it must be sacrificed and laid aside if it would keep you from attaining the crown of life.

There is one other passage in this connection which we need to mention: John 15:1-7. In verse 5 of this passage, Jesus says, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*"

Jesus is the true vine, and each of his disciples is a branch in that vine. This is a powerful lesson on how we must look to Jesus, and "abide" in Him as the sustaining source for spiritual life, if we are to be productive and fruitful.

It is imperative therefore that we maintain a vital connection, always, with Him who is the source of our lives. This not only means faithful worship and fellowship with the church, but also daily, personal communion with Christ in prayer and meditation and in study of His Word. *"Without me,"* Jesus says, *"ye can do nothing."*

Paul's statement in Gal. 2:20 is a good example of what it means to live a Christ-centered life: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; 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."*

Adapted from a sermon by KENT DICKINSON  
(Deceased)

## APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Do you believe that the body will be resurrected when the Lord returns?

ANSWER: This question, though seemingly simple, requires more than a simple yes or no.

It first should be pointed out, that the Bible does teach that all who have lived, both good and bad, will be resurrected at the last day. Jesus made this clear in John 5:28, 29. Jesus states, *"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."* This teaches us that the doctrines of no resurrection and a resurrection of only the saved are false. The truth is that all will be raised.

Since we have established that there will be a resurrection, we turn our attention to the nature of the body that we will possess after the resurrection has taken place. We pose the question, 'Will it be the body we now possess or will it be of another nature?' 'Will we even have a "body" after the resurrection?' To gain insight into the matter we will appeal to the writings of Paul in I Corinthians 15.

Paul in the entirety of this chapter, addresses the subject of the resurrection. This is done to refute those who were among the Corinthians that were teaching that the dead will not rise. Paul begins his affirmation of the resurrection by first appealing to the resurrection of Christ. This he established to have occurred by referring to eyewitness testimony. He lists all who saw Christ after he was raised. Paul then proceeds to point out that if the resurrection of Christ did not occur, then the entire faith of Christians is vain. Since it did occur, then we too will be resurrected. Paul writes, *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."* Paul next turns his attention to the question of the nature of the body at the resurrection.

In verse 35 the question is posed, *"How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"* Will it be identical with the one that is planted? Will we have the same body that we possess in this life? To this Paul responds, "No." In verse 37 he states, *"and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be..."* Here Paul teaches us by an analogy that the body of flesh and blood as we now have will not be the body we will have after the resurrection. He compares the resurrection to the planting of grain. What we sow is not what comes forth. He further elaborates on the difference between what is sown and what is raised in verses 42 through 44. *"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body..."* Paul continues to tell us that the first man is earthly, that is from the earth, but the second is heavenly. He also states that the body of flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. He concludes by speaking of the change that will occur at the coming of Christ, in the twinkling of an eye.

Now, in answer to the question originally posed we offer the following: There will be a resurrection. We will possess a body. The body that is planted (buried) is not identical with that body that shall be raised. The body that we plant is planted in corruption but will be raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour but raised in glory. It is planted in weakness but raised in power. It is sown a natural body but will be raised a spiritual body. The body we now have is of flesh and blood but the body we receive will not be as this one.

In conclusion, all who are Christians anxiously await the time when we can lay this body down with all its infirmities and receive from God the spiritual body he will prepare for us, so immortality can be ours and we can live forever with Christ in that beautiful home called Heaven.

SAM DICK  
Cave City, KY

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## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
June 2 - 5	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	Hunter Bulger (Fort Deposit, AL)
June 5 - 10	Taylor's Crossroads Roanoke, AL	Allan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
June 6 - 10	Estesburg Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
June 6 - 10	Hopkinsville Hopkinsville, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 12 - 17	Mount Carmel Woodland, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 17 - 19	Cold Springs Bogue Chitto, MS	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
June 19 - 24	Ephesus Ephesus, GA	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 23 - 24	2011 Fellowship Conference Desoto State Park, Fort Payne, AL	Various Speakers
June 23 - 26	Ashlock Near Celina, TN	Hunter Bulger (Fort Deposit, AL)

June  
24 - 26

Hokes Bluff  
Hokes Bluff, AL

Wilbur Bass  
(Auburn, AL)

June 27  
- July 1

Annual Camp Meeting  
Welk Resort, Branson, MO

Various Speakers

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month's questions?

1. What were Joseph's brothers planning to blame his death on after they killed him? A WILD ANIMAL ATTACK (Gen. 37:20)
2. When David defeated Zobah, I Chronicles says he went as far as Hamath, to establish his power by what river? THE EUPHRATES (1 Chron. 18:3)
3. According to the book of Isaiah, what two tribes would devour each other, yet both be against Judah? EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH (Isa. 9:21)
4. When the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign, He told them the only sign they would see was the sign of what prophet? JONAS (Matt. 12:39)
5. What illustration did Paul use in the eleventh chapter of Romans to symbolize God's acceptance of Gentiles in place of Jews? THE BRANCHES OF A WILD OLIVE TREE (Rom. 11:17-24)