

IDENTITY CRISIS

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

In the blindness of his veiled mind, mankind has forever been seeking his identity, and never finding the truth until the veil is taken away and his identity is revealed as Christ. In the flesh, before Jesus is even known, this desire for identity manifests in a myriad of ways, and causes many problems, not least the tensions among the nations, the races and the genders, as people rally around their own identity, and seek to give it preeminent value by putting down competing identities. At the root of it all is insecurity. Mankind makes a show of celebrating diversity, but this cannot be fully achieved owing to the dread of being inferior to a different category of person.

There are many obvious forms of identity, such as a career, a hobby, or a political leaning, and those that are less obvious, such as those who want to be known as the funniest, strongest, or fastest in their little sphere, but they all tie in directly to man's wanderings in the darkness of the carnal mind. So many identities are chased after, sometimes for a lifetime, to combat the terror of insignificance and the danger of being lost among earth's billions, like the proverbial needle in a haystack. Have we not all heard someone say, in reference to some aspect of themselves, "*It is who I am*"? or "*I just want to be able to call myself a.....*"

Now, one would think that such insecurities would wither and die once Christ is revealed, and the luminance of His glory burns away the faded patterns of carnality. But this is not so, as even among those who name the name of Christ, there is the same desire for a glorious identity other than Christ Himself.

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. ¹² Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:10-13)

This is one manner in which the believers at Corinth were seeking their own identity, each choosing their own faction, and bringing division to the body. But even more than this, we see the desire for identity in the ambition with which many chase a career as a preacher, or teacher, or musician, or pastor – and in the many labels these people give themselves once they have clambered upon their pedestal, be it Reverend Apostle Prophet, or some such strain of self-aggrandizement. These things do not necessarily come from a consciously evil motive, but often from the same insecurity the carnal man always feels, and the need for a grand identity to shine like a beacon before him. Such a perspective is worthy of pity more than contempt, as it betrays a lack of revelation of the blessed reality of Jesus Christ, who is our identity – ALL of our identity.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many

of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:1-4)

It is important to realize that this identity begins with His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, and encapsulates everything that He is. We cannot seek to identify with His life and resurrection only, because resurrection can only take place after death. It is when we know the fellowship of His sufferings, that we shall also know the power of His resurrection:

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed *I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, *that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him*, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*, ¹¹ *if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.* (Philippians 3:7-11)

We are not merely outwardly identifying with Jesus as an external figure who died and was resurrected, but we are receiving the revelation of having been on the cross in Him, and in the tomb in Him, and risen in Him! It is His dwelling within us, conforming us to His nature in the inward man, and unfolding the wonders of heavenly things from within, the very streams of living water he described to the Samaritan woman! The mystery of Jesus Christ alive within us is the gradual increasing revelation that shall ultimately cause all things to be submitted to Him, when God shall be All in all!

Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— ¹³ unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵ But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶ Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:12-18)

Once we begin to see this glory in the face of Christ, and realize it is within us, there is nowhere else we need to look for our identity. Yes, on earth we may be fathers, and mothers, and sons, and daughters, and painters and plumbers, and writers and athletes. Yes, we may be black, white, brown, short, tall, good looking, plain, fat or thin – indeed, we may be ministers and proclaimers of the word, healers and servants, teachers and prophets - but none of these things *identify the eternal reality of who we are!* And once the true identity of every man is revealed, we then begin to see and hear in that realm of Spirit, and set our mind upon the same:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)

Notice that Paul does not say “*Christ, who brings you life*”, nor “*Christ, who gave you life*,” but rather “*Christ who IS your life*”! We will appear with Him in glory because He IS our life!

It behooves us then to pay less attention to the religious and carnal scuttling, scrambling and jockeying for preeminence, and instead understand that our identity in is *the* preeminent Son of God! Once this blessed reality envelopes us, we shall have no more need for adoring crowds, for flattering voices, or for constant validation, because all of our worth, all of our value, and all of our treasure is in Christ, as Christ is in us, and as the Father is in all!

In the light of all these things, let us close by considering carefully the prayer of Jesus in the fourth gospel, after He had first prayed for His apostles and disciples:

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will^[e] believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³ I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

²⁴ “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. ²⁶ And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:20-26)

Amen!