

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Christ Our Savior and Our Life

by Dan Trygg

“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But *for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.*”

John 12:27-28

“...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might *die to sin and live to righteousness*; for by His wounds you were healed.”

I Peter 2:24

As Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He knew what was coming. He was already anticipating, and feeling the heaviness of, the events that were to come to pass over the next several days. The plan of God in dealing with sin was about to play out in the coming week. We could explore the details of what God did through Jesus, and why He chose to do it as He did, for many pages. For our purposes here, however, I want to simply introduce four concepts for us to ponder:

(1.) Christ *for* us; (2.) Christ *as* us; (3.) Christ *together with* us; and (4.) Christ *in* us.

(1.) Christ For Us -- Most of us are familiar with this concept. Basically, it means that **Christ paid for our sins, instead of us**. It is like we owed a debt, and we had no ability to even *begin* to pay it back, so God sent Jesus to pay our debt. In the OT, if someone committed a crime against someone else's property, e.g., theft, robbery, vandalism, or abuse, the judgment of the law was that he/she had to make restitution. If he could not afford to do so in such a circumstance, he could be sold into slavery to repay the debt. In such cases, a close relative could step forward to pay the amount owed in order to free the debtor from his indenture. This person was called a “kinsman redeemer” (e.g., Lev. 25:23-55). *Redemption* means that a price had to be paid for the release of the debt and the debtor.

Jesus has come from God to be our Kinsman Redeemer. No human could ever pay for the sins of another, since we all have sinned, and the penalty for sin is death (Psa. 49:7,8; Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Anyone who had *ever* sinned, even *one* time, would only be able to pay for his/her own sin. It would do no good to offer to die for another. More than money was required to satisfy the debt of sin, it was life itself (I Pet. 1:18,19). From a legal standpoint, once we recognize and acknowledge that we are sinners, the question is, “*How can my debt of sin ever be paid for?*” Christ's death *for us* answers this question. Jesus, as a perfect sinless human, was able to offer Himself as a sacrificial payment for the sins of all people. As God the Son, His life was *infinitely precious*, worth much more than the lives of the entire human race. **He paid our debt for us, by offering His very life in exchange for our freedom** (Heb. 9:11-14,22-28). This was the meaning of His cry from the cross, “It is finished!” The Greek word (*tetelestai*) was the word merchants of that day wrote on the bills of people who paid off their debts. It meant, “paid in full” or “account closed”. This is consistent with what Jesus Himself had said, “The Son of Man came ...to give His life a *ransom* for many” (Mk. 10:45). As Paul later observed, “...in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph. 1:7; cf. I Pet. 3:18). Jesus' life was the redemption price which God provided to buy us out of our hopeless debt of sin. God demonstrated His love for us by sending Christ to die for us (Rom. 5:8). **All we must do in order to benefit from His provision is to accept His payment offered on our behalf by repentance and faith.** Repentance is a change of perspective and purpose. Faith is trusting His provision and faithfulness to do for us what He has offered, and *living as if this is true* by choosing to follow Him. God *expects* us to follow (Matt. 28:19,20).

(2.) Christ As Us -- This second aspect of Jesus' work to deliver us from sin has to do with *substitution*. This idea of **paying our debt would not be possible unless Jesus could somehow “stand in” for us**. The idea of *substitutionary atonement* was solidly imbedded in the mind of the Jewish people. They clearly understood that when they offered up an animal on the altar, it was “standing in” for them. They would lay their hands upon the animal, signifying *their identity with it*, and symbolically *placing their sins upon it*, ...and then they would slay it, signifying their own death. They were taught that the life of an animal or person was in its blood. They were made aware of this principle every day, because they had to butcher and prepare their meat in special ways to avoid eating any blood (Gen. 9:4). The entire OT sacrificial system was based upon this fact, “the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life *within it* that makes atonement” (Lev. 17:11). The word, “atonement” meant “covering”, so God permitted them to offer the blood of animals as a *temporary covering* for their sin, until a provision could be made to *remove* them (cf. Rom. 3:25). In a way similar to the OT sacrifices, **Jesus voluntarily took our place. Like a lamb led to slaughter, His blood was shed, and the punishment that was meant for us was forever removed, because His sacrifice was of so much**

greater value than mere animal offerings (Heb. 9:22-10:10; Isa. 53:1-12; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24; Rom. 5:6-11). Somehow He managed to take *for us* the punishment which God's wrath demanded, so that God has no more wrath to pour out on those Jesus represented. The death blow that was meant for the rest of *us* fell upon *Him* (Isa. 53:8).

(3.) Christ Together-With Us -- This third concept is not as familiar to most people who have been exposed to Christian teaching, because it has not been well taught, and it is difficult for people from our cultural background to understand. The concept has been given fancy names by different theologians. Some refer to it as *federal headship* or *corporate personality* or as *representative solidarity*. Basically, the idea is that **Jesus somehow represents humanity so perfectly and completely that when He acts, it is as though we also act, ...likewise, when something is done to Him, it is also done to all those He represents.** To us, as individualistic-minded Westerners, this makes no sense. To the Eastern mind, however, -- where *the group* is the center of one's identity, not the individual -- this concept is not difficult to grasp. Paul discusses this in Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:21-23,45-49; and II Cor. 5:14-17. In his own conversion experience, the resurrected Jesus referred to this reality when He asked Paul, "...why do you persecute *Me*?" (Acts 9:4; cf. Matt. 25:40) This "in-your-face" encounter he had with this statement of Christ's solidarity with His people probably is why this apostle seems to appreciate and refer to this concept more than anyone else in the NT. It is the basis for most of his teaching about growing as a Christian in Romans 5-8.

As incredible as it may seem, what Paul teaches is that:

When Jesus was crucified, we also were crucified (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20);

When Jesus died, we also died (Rom. 6:5,8; Col. 2:20; 3:3; II Tim. 2:11)

When Jesus was buried, we also were buried (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:19)

When Jesus rose from the dead, we also rose from the dead to newness of life (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 2:6).

This is fundamental Christian doctrine. **If we do not understand this, or at least learn to apply its reality on a practical level, we will not be able to move into maturity.** The basis for freedom from bondage to the flesh, from the power of sin, and from the demands of the law are firmly established upon the reality of our union with Christ in His death, resurrection, and even His ascension (Eph. 2:5,6). The fact that there *is* a "new person" that we can "put on", as well as an "old person" that we can now "put off", is also founded upon this same principle.

(4.) Christ In Us -- This fourth component of God's provision deals with the *power to live* as Jesus would live. In Colossians 1:26-29, Paul speaks of a mystery that *was unknown and hidden* from past generations, but which *has now been manifested* to God's people. This mystery is described by the apostle as **"Christ in you, the hope of the glory"**. **What glory? The glory or radiance of God's abiding presence within us** (cf. Jn. 1:14; Heb. 1:2; II Cor. 3:4-4:6; Jn. 17:20-22). This is *crucial!* **This is where the power for change in our lives comes from. It is Christ in us.** In Galatians 2:20, Paul says, "I have been crucified in Christ. I (myself) no longer live, but Christ *in me* lives. But now what life I live in flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up on my behalf." Christ lives *in me*. How does He live in me, if He is sitting up in heaven at the Father's right hand? Through the presence of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in each believer. Jesus spoke of this in Jn. 14:16-18. The Holy Spirit is sent to live within us, so that we would not be alone, desolate or friendless. He is sent to be our Helper, one who will empower and enable us to do what we cannot do on our own.

We still have the choice regarding how we want to live, ...by our own self-understanding and self-strength, ...or by the power, wisdom and leading of Jesus who lives in us. In either case, we will get the consequences, or resulting fruit, of our choices.

If we choose to live by self-understanding and self-will, then we will get the same results we have been getting up until now in our lives. Our lives will, *at best*, be ruled by human ingenuity and self-discipline. Such a life will be a very limited, human existence. *At worst*, it will be foolish, wasteful, self-centered and self-destructive.

If we choose to live by the leading and power of the indwelling Christ, however, then the consequences and fruit of our lives will be very different. People will see something in us that is hard to explain or relate to from their own experience. We will do things that sometimes don't make sense to them. We will be willing and able to serve and help others joyfully, and seem to *be refreshed* by it. **They will see a new joy in our lives, a new freedom. We will begin to grow and make changes in our lives.** We will have a new motivation to put aside destructive patterns in our lives, and choose to establish healthy ones. We will become more gracious, kind and compassionate toward others. We will be willing to help others, with no strings attached. **Our lives will be marked by amazing love, overflowing joy, incredible peace, remarkable patience, abundant kindness, wonderful goodness, positive faith, consistent dependability and persistent self-control, ...the fruit of keeping-in-step-with the Holy Spirit** (Gal. 5:16,22,23). Jesus' death *for us, as us, together-with us*, and His resurrection life *inside of us* make this possible.