

## **SERMON, MAY 2, 2021, Zion, Akron, Ohio**

The Christian life begins with a recognition of who we are in Christ Jesus. I offer the following confession of faith to you. It is exactly what we believe. I invite you to recite it line by line after me. That way you can hear yourself declaring what God has said is true. You are not declaring these things to make them happen. God says that they have already happened! This is God's answer to the human question "Who am I?" This is who you're in Christ Jesus. Speak it with confidence. This is the proclamation of your identity.

**I believe that in Christ Jesus my sins have been fully and freely forgiven, and I am a new creation.**

**I have died with Jesus to my old identity in Adam. I have been raised with Jesus to a new life.**

**I am seated in the heavenly places in Jesus. God has given to me the full righteousness of Jesus. I am joined with angels, archangels, and all the saints in heaven.**

**God is my Father, and if He is for me, who can be against me?**

**Because of who I am in Jesus, I am more than a conqueror. In fact, I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me.**

**Christ Jesus is my life! Everything in my life here on this earth is working out for good according to the purposes of God.**

**Jesus Himself dwells within me. I have been called according to the purposes of God.**

**These things I believe and confess because God, my Father in Heaven, says they are true. Amen!"**

This identity that you just confessed is true. This is who you are in Christ Jesus. This is the meaning of grace. We are not worthy to be spoken of in this fashion. God does not look at us and declare that these things are true. He is looking at Jesus. As we look at Jesus, we see what the Triune God sees. We identify ourselves as God identifies us.

If you should fall, your identity has not changed. No matter what the devil might try to tell you. Rise up! Brush yourself off. Receive your forgiveness. Lift up your eyes to the throne. Go on your way rejoicing as the result of the life of Jesus dwelling within you. Dwelling within you through the Holy Spirit.

Remember the words of Jesus. **"Remain in Me and I will remain in you."**

As we remain in Christ, and He remains in us, then through Him we will bear much fruit. Here's the truth.

This is Colossians 1:27 **"Christ in you, the hope of glory."**

Seeking to live the Christian life means that we find ourselves in Jesus. We seek an on-going, life-affecting experience with Him who dwells within us.

Being right with God is based upon what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 1:3 reads, "**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.**"

Paul wrote this in 1 Corinthians 1:30 "**It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.**"

God does not offer to us forgiveness, righteousness, love, peace, joy, gifts, ministries, wealth, and prosperity as separate entities. Since our identity is in Christ, we cannot claim anything that comes from God as belonging to us. God has only given to us one thing: Jesus, who is our life. In Jesus are all the blessings and benefits of life and salvation.

This is from Colossians 2:2,3,6,7,10 "**That they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge .... So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him . . . and you have been given fullness in Christ**".

This is 2 Peter 1:3, "**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness.**"

Watchman Nee wrote: "**God will not give you humility or patience or holiness or love as separate gifts of His grace. He is not a retailer dispensing grace to us in packets, measuring out some patience to the impatient, some love to the un-loving, some meekness to the proud, in quantities that we take and work on as a kind of capital. He has given only one gift to meet our need: His Son Christ Jesus. As we look to Him to live out His life in us, He will be humble and patient and loving and everything else we need--in my stead ...It does not matter what your personal deficiency, or whether it be a hundred and one different things, God has always one All sufficient answer, His Son Jesus Christ, and He is the answer to every human need.**"

It is very important for our understanding and experience of the Christian life that we recognize that all Christian benefits, gifts, and fruit are found in the person of Jesus who dwells within us. They belong to Jesus, not to us.

Our focus is not to be directed at spiritual gifts and blessings but at the person of Jesus. If we desire the forgiveness of sins and a righteousness that is acceptable to God, God gives us Jesus. If we seek peace, joy, and love, God gives us Jesus. If we desire comfort in the midst of sorrow, God gives us Jesus. If we desire hope when things look hopeless, God gives us Jesus. If we desire assurance when plagued by doubt, God gives us Jesus. If we desire contentment through the changing scenes of life, God gives us Jesus.

All spiritual gifts are simply manifestations of the new life of Christ dwelling with us. They are manifested spontaneously as we walk in the Spirit by directing our consciousness to Jesus.

Colossians 2:8 reads, "**See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.**" The substance of the Christian faith is found in the person and work of Christ.

Colossians 2:16 reads, "**Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to religious festival.... These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**"

He warns the Colossians against seeking spiritual substance outside of Christ.

Colossians 2:18, "**Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his un-spiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head.**"

When we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, all of the benefits found in Him become our possession. We have His peace and joy, His righteousness and holiness. His love is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus we are complete and fulfilled. The gospel is a message of good news that calls us away from and out of ourselves and unto Jesus! We discover everything "in Christ." We will find nothing "outside of Christ." "Christ is all and in all!"

That's why we can agree when Jesus says, "**I am the way and the truth and the life.**" Jesus speaks of Himself as being the very essence of all the blessings and promises of God. At Lazarus' tomb, Jesus did not speak of resurrection as being a reward for a life well lived. He said, "**I am the resurrection.**" After feeding the 5000, He offered himself as being the very bread that came down from heaven.

As John 1:4 says, "**In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.**" He is the light of the word. He is the water of life. He is the good shepherd.

We Put on Jesus on Jesus as Galatians 3:27 reads, "**All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**"

When we were brought to faith in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, we received all of the blessings that are in Christ. He became joined to us, so that whatever gifts, grace, peace, joy, or contentment are manifested in us, they belong to Him. They belong to us only because we have Jesus dwelling within us. We are seeking Jesus! There is nothing that we will find outside of Jesus. Nor will we discover anything worthwhile inside of us apart from Him. We seek all things "in Christ"!

We are born into this world in Adam. The old sinful and fallen nature of Adam was joined to us. As a result of coming to faith in Jesus, we were born again. The life of Jesus was joined to us. Living the Christian life simply means that we live according to our new life in Christ and not according to our old life in Adam. The old sinful nature which adheres to us as a result of our birth in Adam is proud, rebellious, self-centered, worldly, and an enemy of God. It is continually demanding our conscious attention. Being dead, it produces dead works. By indulging our old sinful nature, we also reap the results of worry, fear, discontent, self-pity, anxiety, depression, and all of the other "blessings" of being human.

We are to take to heart the words of Colossians 2:6, "**Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, CONTINUE TO LIVE WITH HIM.**"

The new life of Jesus adheres to us and is obedient, submissive, kind, loving, gentle. It produces life! The Holy Spirit is at work in us, urging us to live and walk in Jesus. When we set our mind on our old sinful nature inherited from Adam, we are focusing upon a "dead thing." By our conscious attention we are "digging up the corpse," so to speak. By setting our minds upon the desires of the Spirit, we are living in Jesus. His life is stirred within us. His peace is our experience.

This is Philippians 4:8, "**Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.**"

This theme of setting our conscious thinking upon the things of the Spirit is an important ingredient in the theology of Paul.

This is Colossians 3:1,2 "**Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.**"

We are to set our minds on the things that are above. Not on earthly things.

This is what Paul says in 2 Cor. 10:4,5 "**The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the WORLD. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**"

This speaks of our battle plan. It speaks of the purpose of our spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 4:22-24 reads, "**Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desire; to be made new in the ATTITUDE OF YOUR MINDS, and to put on the new self, created in true righteousness and holiness.**"

This is Romans 12:2. "**We are not to be conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds.**"

The very word "repentance" means to "change your mind." We are urged to rejoice in the Lord. To be filled with thanksgiving to God. To not be anxious, fearful, or filled with worry. We are to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in our hearts to the Lord. All these instructions are intended to direct our hearts and minds away from our old sinful nature and to the new life that we have in Jesus.

Our minds are at the very center of our being. Whether we live for the old self or live according to our new life in Christ is related to the direction and substance of our thought life. This truth is the practical aspect of living and walking in the Spirit.

The problem is, we are not able to control the thoughts that come at us. Worry, fear, lust, anger, hatred, and self-pity come knocking on our door. We seek to be entertained. The devil, the world, and our self-centered, sinful flesh are continually bombarding our minds with worries and fears. Thoughts of self-pity, resentment, bitterness, envy, and the like. It is one thing to have these thoughts enter your mind. It is something quite different to entertain them and dwell upon them.

It is said, "**You cannot prevent the birds from flying in the air over your head, but you can certainly prevent them from building a nest in your hair.**"

What do we do when the desires of our sinful human nature cry out for attention? What do we do when the devil stands ready to bring us into worry, fear, depression, self-pity, and the like? There is no better means for turning away from ourselves and abiding in Jesus than by singing a song of praise and worship unto Jesus. Anger, fear, bitterness, lust, and envy always gives way to the joyful sounds of praise and worship.