

1) Jesus is the Way in Which We Live

- a) To live is Christ
 - i) Paul again leaves out an expected preposition: “for” or “in”
 - ii) He is *completely* identifying his life with the life of Christ
 - (1) “Through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ who lives in me. What I now live in flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who is loving me, who even gave Himself up in my place.” (Gal 2:20-21)
 - (2) Paul has died to the law as the means which saves Him, and now lives completely for God through faith in His Son, Jesus.
- b) Service for Christ
 - i) The preaching of Christ is his business of life
 - ii) The presence of Christ is the joy of his life
 - iii) The image of Christ the crown of my life
 - iv) The Spirit of Christ the life of my life
 - v) The love of Christ the power of my life
 - vi) The will of Christ the law of my life
 - vii) The glory of Christ the end of my life
 - viii) In every danger, shipwreck, bondage, threat; in every letter, song, admonition, encouragement; in all moments, through each circumstance, with every word: to live is Christ.
- c) Fellowship With Christ
 - i) Our Fellowship with the Person of Christ Can be Cultivated
 - ii) We must be careful that we do not turn the gospel into an event to merely be studied, while leaving the person of Christ outside of our fellowship.
 - (1) Jesus is living and personal
 - (2) The Spirit is living and personal
 - (3) The Father is living and personal
 - (4) Christianity, at its root, is personal contact between the finite souls of humans with the holy God of Heaven through the blood of Jesus Christ.
 - iii) 1 John 1:3 – “...we proclaim to you what we have seen and heard so that you might have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.”

“The modern scientist has lost God amidst the wonders of His world; we Christians are in real danger of losing God amidst the wonders of His Word. We have almost forgotten that God is a Person and, as such, can be cultivated as any person can.” -A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, 1948

- (a) Fellowship is not the antithesis of doctrine. In fact, strong biblical doctrine leads us into fellowship with Christ for it reveals Him to us. Doctrine was very important to the apostles (note that John writes about the necessity of accuracy of the Truth in his gospel and letters)
- (b) Doctrine is simply the teachings and revelation of Christ, but to know about Christ (doctrine) is not the end goal. The end goal of doctrine is to always lead us to fellowship with Christ.
- iv) Teaching and preaching (doctrine) to this end was the “fruitful work” that Paul envisioned in living Christ
 - (1) Eph 4:11-13 – God has gifted the church with pastor/teachers to lead us into “unity of the faith, even the knowledge of the Son of God...”

- (2) Col 3:1-4 – You’ve been raised up with Christ, so seek Him, and to understand the implications of the gospel

2) The Sufficiency of Christ

- a) We never get beyond the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- i) Not merely the entrance into the Kingdom, but He is the WAY in which we walk
 - (1) John 14:6 – “I am the way, the truth, and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except by Me.”
 - (2) “road on which take each step”
 - (3) not merely the door to the Christian life, but the very way in which we make any progress
 - (4) The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God for righteousness and the sufficient means in which we walk every day
 - ii) Not merely ABC’s, but the A-Z
 - (1) Galatians 2:14, Peter was not walking “in-line with the Gospel”
 - (a) Peter was not acting according to Jesus and His work, but was using law again
 - (b) This is “out of line” with the gospel of Christ
 - iii) Not merely the first stair in a stairway of truths, but the hub in the wheel of truth

“All Christian blessings and resources are grounded in the blood of the Lamb. Do you find yourself accepted before this holy God? If so, it is because of the blood of the Lamb. Have you received the blessed Holy Spirit? He has been poured out because of the blood of the Lamb. Do you have the prospect of consummated eternal life in glory? It was secured by the blood of the Lamb. Are you in the fellowship of saints, brothers and sisters who love Christ, the church of the living God, a new body, the body of Christ on earth? This is bought, secured, and constituted by the blood of the Lamb. Are you grateful for the spiritual armaments that Paul tells us to deploy (Ephesians 6)? The entire arsenal is at our disposal because of the blood of the Lamb. May we go to God in prayer? It is because of the blood of the Lamb. Do we find our wills strengthened by the Spirit? That incalculable benefit was secured by the blood of the Lamb. Every whiff of victory over the principalities and powers of this dark age has been secured by the blood of the Lamb.”

—D.A. Carson, *Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus*

- b) Understanding the Gospel of Christ is the way that we are renewed (Col 1:6)
- i) The Gospel expands through our entire life
 - ii) Living thing (bearing fruit and growing)
 - iii) bears fruit “as we understand it”
 - (1) this is what was “necessary for your sake”
 - (2) This growth in the faith, the application and belief of the gospel is the reason that Paul is torn between being with Christ himself, or staying on and living Christ for the sake of others in helping them understand the gospel of Christ and His glory.
 - iv) Continues throughout our lives “as it has been doing since the day you heard..”
 - (a) It is central to our growth
 - (b) It is central to the way in which we live and the purpose for which we live, even though to die and be with Christ is far better for us individually

- c) All of our problems come from a failure to apply the good news of Christ to our hearts and to our actions
 - i) Luther quote: “The truth of the Gospel is the principle article of all Christian doctrine....Most necessary is it that we know this article well, teach it to others, and beat it into their heads continually.” -Commentary on Galatians
 - ii) We all, to differing degrees, live around the truth of the Gospel and don’t “get” it.
 - (1) We grow, says Paul, by understanding all of its truth
 - (2) He is the truth, and to know Him as He has revealed Himself is our goal
 - iii) A stage of renewal or growth is always the discovery of a new implication or application of the gospel – a seeing more of its truth.
 - (1) Both for individuals and for a church

We need to be continually with Christ, to grow in our knowledge of Him and of His work, to do good works from the heart, to live holy, to walk humbly...and the key to this continual spiritual growth is the continual re-discovery of the gospel--seeing more of the immense Person and work of Christ Jesus every day and applying those truths to our lives in each situation, so that we can say with the Apostle, “To live is Christ”.

What Does it Look Like to Live Christ?

We typically live like this, “to live is Christ *and...*” This belief that there is something needed *besides* Christ for us to be joyful and fulfilled results in two deceptive diversions from Christ: moralism and relativism. Think of it this way: “To live is Christ and morality” and “To live is Christ and freedom”. One emphasizes the boundaries placed upon us by God. The other emphasizes the internal self-rule and “free to be me” attitude, where the individual ultimately determines what is right and/or good for him or her. Notice that both of these, whether encapsulated in religious systems or in irreligious philosophies of life, avoid the central premise, “To live is Christ.” (period!)

The relativist denies the depth of our extreme sin before God, of our enemy status and pervasively depraved heart, but without a knowledge of our extreme sin, the payment of the cross seems trivial and does not impassion or transform us to live Christ. The moralist denies the depth of God’s grace in Christ, but without a knowledge of Christ’s completely satisfying life, death, and resurrection, then the knowledge of sin eventually crushes us or moves us to deny and repress it becoming functional relativists (although we pick and choose which sins are relative), living our lives not for Christ but rather in a constant and unwinnable effort to make ourselves acceptable before God.

Take away either the deep knowledge of deep sin or the deep knowledge of deep grace and your lives will be overrun with joylessness and self-centeredness, not Christ. You will be crushed by trying to live up to His example, or you will run away from Him angrily or in shame. We don’t simply move from being irreligious to being religious, but we recognize that at the root of both is the same sinful seed: the desire to be a self-savior and to keep Jesus under our control, from being our complete Redeemer. If we can keep Jesus under control by denying our complete need of Him and maintaining some element of personal strength, then we can say “no” when He asks us to take great risks. However, when we depend in Jesus as our *complete* Redeemer, we turn from trusting either self-determination or self-denial for our salvation – from both moralism and relativism, and our joy of belonging to God through the blood of the Cross determines our loving service to Christ. Matt Redman quoting John, “This is how we know what love is: just one look at Your cross. We love Him because He loved us first.” Understanding the depth of grace that delves deeper than the incredible depths of our sin actually generates a love for Christ. Here are some modified examples from Tim Keller:

Approach to love and relationships.

Moralism often makes relationships into a "blame-game". This is because a moralist is traumatized by criticism that is too severe, and maintains a self-image as a good person by blaming others. On the other hand, moralism can use the procuring of love as the way to "earn our salvation" and convince ourselves we are worthy persons. That often creates what is called "codependency"-- a form of self-salvation through needing people or needing people to need you (i.e. saving yourself by saving others). On the other hand, much relativism reduces love to a negotiated partnership for mutual benefit. You only relate as long as it is not costing you anything. So the choice (without the gospel) is to selfishly use others or to selfishly let yourself be used by others. But the gospel leads us to do neither. We do sacrifice and commit, but not out of a need to convince ourselves or others we are acceptable and good. So we can love the person enough to confront, yet stay with the person when it does not benefit us, for "to live is Christ."

Approach to Evangelism:

Moralism makes evangelism into a contest of "winning souls" which is largely dependent upon our choices and programs and our ability to convince people into the Kingdom of God. When a moralist succeeds, he has won converts to himself, but when he fails he bears the blame of people's souls upon himself and is devastated by guilt. Often moralists will emphasize the "repent of your sins" of the gospel and deny the grace of God in Christ.

Relativists see no need to share the gospel, because people aren't so bad that they need to repent or believe specific truths. People just need to know that they're loved, no matter how they live or what they believe. Therefore, there is no zeal to glorify Christ and His cross and therefore no zeal to share the gospel. Relativists often emphasize "believe that God loves you", but deny that repentance is necessary to come to Christ, ultimately denying that Christ died to save us from these sins. God's love becomes sentimental, but not transformative to holy living for Christ.

The gospel-centered believer makes evangelism contingent upon glorifying the One who saved her. She proclaims Jesus because she loves Him and His cross. She knows that God loves His glory first and foremost and that His love is based upon this, so she wants to glorify Him, too. She wants the world to know of the greatness of Christ and His amazing grace toward sinners like her. She will admit that she is deeply flawed and sinful while also rejoicing in the glorious grace of God shown toward her in the sacrifice of Christ. So, her proclamation of the gospel includes both repentance of sins (we need a Savior to redeem us from sin) and that Christ's death atones for those sins completely by His grace. Her attitude is an appeal to trust Him with energy and power and exalts Christ, her treasure, more than His mere blessings.

It is the truth that I am more deeply sinful than I even now know, and I am more deeply loved than I ever dared hope that will push me to live Christ, to give up my reputation for the power and glory of Christ and His Cross.

Lord Jesus, You are worthy, much more worthy than we know. We entreat You to reveal Yourself to us, strengthening our souls to grasp the greatness of Your grace and the majesty of Your person. We want to know You, O Creator God. We want to be near to you, to rejoice in Your presence. There is nothing greater than being in Your throneroom. We worship You today, for You are glorious and we are grateful for being our all in all.