

HIS SIDE VERSUS OUR SIDE - OVERVIEW OF GALATIANS

Or, What is a TRUE Christian?

by Norman Harrison

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CHAPTER 16 POSSESSORS VERSUS PROFESSORS - GALATIANS 6:17

"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" -- Galatians 6:17

The word "marks" carries the sense of "brands," referring to the branding of slaves with the marks of ownership. Thus the slave was bound to his master. Paul sees himself bound to the Lord JESUS CHRIST by marks upon his body incurred in His service. One should read the listing in II Corinthians 11:23-33. These are the marks that count, as against the superficial markings of circumcision which Paul is combating as being of no avail. Back of these markings of Paul is the real, divinely administered circumcision -- that of the heart. In this final antithesis the distinctive marks of a genuine Christian are set over against the superficial tests by which a man may readily be rated as a Christian when he is not.

Thinking of the Christian life as a matter of conduct we are judging by appearance. The danger of being deceived is well illustrated by our Lord's parable of the wheat and the tares. In the orient tares, or darnel, are a growth so fully simulating the wheat that only an expert can detect the difference, especially in the earlier states. So, if we think of the Christian as one who does something, such as going to church, reading the Bible, giving generously, we are apt to be fooled by mere appearances -- just an imitation, an attempt to be like the genuine.

In the series of antitheses making up the message of Galatians the distinctive marks of a Christian are brought to light.

They define the real Christian in unmistakable terms; they distinguish him from among his fellows. They set him on GOD's side.

1 -- His Birth

The man Christian is of royal birth. Others are born once -- into the human family; he is born a second time -- into the divine family. This is one of Jesus' MUSTS. Responding to it Christian is "**a new creature**" (Galatians 6:15). "**Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus**" (Galatians 3:26). A Christian CAN behave differently because he IS different. Let us note the

antithetical "but" placed between these two births: one is of the flesh; the other is of the Spirit.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12,13)

This is the initial distinguishing mark, short of which nothing counts. The chief, vital consideration is Life -- divine life, His life. Could men but see this they would not continue to confuse the Christian faith with mere religion and religious obligation. I am reminded of a friend's experience in seeking to lead a man into the Christian life. He was well dressed and intelligent. My friend explained what it means to receive CHRIST as one's Saviour, but just when he thought he was succeeding the man revealed his utter lack of comprehension. He said, "Mister, I want to tell you: I have a wife and nine children, and I can't take on any more responsibility."

Responsibility! when the Christian faith bestows Life -- life that alone enables one to meet his already existing responsibilities. And how do we receive life? Work for it? Never. The only way we know is to be born with it. As we were born into the human family, just so must we be born into the divine family, "**born of God**," without effort on our part. Nowhere in all Scripture do we see so clearly and convincingly as in this antithetical message of Galatians the absolute need of an imparted life -- imparted by saving faith in JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

2 -- His Standing With GOD

Christian is "**justified by faith**" (Galatians 3:24), which means that he is cleared from all charges against him as a sinner. "**Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?**" (Romans 8:33,34). No one! because GOD justifies by setting His own righteousness to our account, and that righteousness is perfect. There is no flaw in it. Every Christian has that standing with GOD. Yours is as good as mine; mine is as good as yours -- it is GOD's own righteousness.

The difference between Christian and all his fellows is then tremendous, eternity-wide. Others have no standing with GOD (other than to be condemned); Christian has a standing that is absolutely perfect.

That such an incalculable benefit -- passing from a position of no standing to one of perfect standing -- should be a bestowment of sheer grace on the part of the bestower, with nothing of merit or desert on the part of the recipient -- this is so "too good to be true," so far beyond human comprehension, it is Good News indeed. To convince man that there is no other way into GOD's favor and to make this point stick like a barbed arrow in man's consciousness -- to do this one thing -- Galatians was written, that by a long series of antitheses, one by one man's false hopes of doing something to right himself with GOD might be torn from his breast.

Man is made to understand that the only basis of favor with GOD is "the righteousness which GOD's righteousness requires Him to require" -- a righteousness found nowhere in the sons of Adam but only in His own flawless life in flesh and blood, that we -- marvelous proposal -- "might become the righteousness of GOD in Him."

3 -- His Start In Life

Christian has his one great problem solved at the very outset -- it is himself, the handicap of a sinful bent received through his Adam inheritance. That sinful "I" was crucified with CHRIST (Galatians 2:20). His promptings to sin -- the lust of the flesh -- CHRIST included in His cross achievement (Galatians 5:24). With these handicaps removed, forces that defeat the thousands of his fellows, Christian can face life with absolute assurance of succeeding.

Man usually learns the hard way -- by experience. He's so confident he can overcome his old self-life, until repeated failure teaches otherwise. In my most recent ministry a fine young woman, graduate of a Bible training school, came to me confessing defeat. What was it? A woefully ungoverned temper. That girl is on top today in the blessed knowledge that CHRIST included her temper -- yes, the temper to her uncontrollable -- in His cross, a victory ministered to her momentarily by the HOLY SPIRIT indwelling her for that purpose. Living on His side of the cross, the word "Done" covers all our need.

4 -- His Resources

Christian has infinite resources for life's living. They are supernatural -- the inliving CHRIST (Galatians 2:20) and the indwelling Spirit (Galatians 4:6). This inner presence is for a purpose. Not only is his natural disability cared for in self-crucifixion; this is but to make possible the moving in of a divine resident. CHRIST lives in him -- He said He would (Revelation 3:20), and He does.

The Spirit has a program of rehabilitation that is unsurpassed. Christian has resources that no one in this world can imitate; they distinguish him from all his fellows. No one can have the Spirit of GOD but by faith in the Son of GOD. This supernatural resource is of immense practical value for daily living. Christian is never let down. CHRIST is always reassuring him: "**My grace is sufficient for thee**" (II Corinthians 12:9). Difficult days come, but He whispers, "**Lo, I am with you alway**" (Matthew 28:20).

"The work that we count hard to do,
He makes easy, for He works too.
The days that we find long to live
Are His -- a bit of His bright eternity,
And close to our need His helping is."

Christian, instead of trying to "get by" on his own self-effort, has as his major responsibility the demonstration, every moment of every day, that these divine resources now his are utterly and unquestionably sufficient. The fact of these resources -- GOD inliving this bit of humanity -- is staggering. Christian is here to prove its practicality at every turn of the road. "**The power that worketh in**" you does indeed what no other power can do.

5 -- His Position Among Men

Christian is a free man, where others are bound. He has been delivered. Men are enslaved, an

enslavement that has wide ramifications. Within are the workings of the flesh, its passions and appetites; without are the fears and forebodings common to men. **"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"** (John 8:36). This Christ-bought, Spirit-wrought freedom is the birthright of the believer. **"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free"** (Galatians 5:1). Christian is a free man, gloriously free.

As I write a friend, returning from abroad, tells me the most impressive feature of life in Europe today is fear, written upon the face and showing even in the walk. In such a world as ours Christian is called to demonstrate that he is freed from fear and every other force that enslaves the sons of men. In this Christian need not, must not fail, for he has chosen sides with One who says, Fear not, **"but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."**

6 -- His Supreme Occupation

Christian has one supreme aim in life, to reproduce CHRIST. To that end CHRIST is formed anew within him (Galatians 4:19). To that end the Spirit busies Himself bringing forth the Christ-flavored fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). Christian yields his body and all his powers that through him CHRIST may live again on earth and men may see CHRIST in the distinctive traits of Christian character. Christian is not occupied with showing people how good he is, calling attention to himself and his attainments. CHRIST lives in him; therefore he so lives that men may recognize the Christ-likeness in him.

If ever there was a challenge, this is it: to turn over one's body to the HOLY SPIRIT, placing all of its powers at His disposal for the realization of His declared purpose to bring out in our lives those traits of character that best reveal CHRIST's indwelling presence. To be thus occupied co-operatively with the Spirit is a life-time undertaking.

To my mind the highest conception of a Christian life, the distinctive purpose it serves on the earth, is found in the statement that "we" -- ordinary Christian people who have come over onto His side to let Him live in us -- that **"we are... a sweet savour of Christ"** -- to whom? -- **"unto God."**

7 -- His Relationship

Christian "belongs" -- he belongs to CHRIST in an indissoluble union. Others have relationships that are entanglements.

Christian belongs to CHRIST so supremely, even as a bride to her bridegroom, that other associations take a secondary place or cease completely. This is life, some One, the most wonderful in all the universe, to live for. **"To me to live is Christ"** (Philippians 1:21). Christian has found Life!

But more. The water of life has turned to the wine of love. When we received CHRIST into our lives we received a great lover, the Lover of our souls. To respond to His love, to live out day by day this lover relationship -- this is the elixir of life.

Dear reader, do not be content without these distinguishing marks being yours. When you stand

at last in the glorious presence of our blessed Lord Jesus and He shows you the marks of His redeeming work upon the cross, the nail prints and the pierced side, you will be ashamed of the superficial marks of mere conduct or character to claim a place at His Side. May you have the genuine marks of the redeemed by which to take your place and feel at home in your Father's house.

Practical Suggestions for Realization

Christian, knowing he is called into a life characterized by this seven-fold portraiture, soon discovers a threefold responsibility on his part. If this life is to be practically realized in his experience, he must give full and continuous cooperation: in the realm of self-crucifixion; the realm of world-crucifixion; in the realm of Christ-likeness.

1 -- Repudiate every prompting of the self life. Recognize the source of any such thought, feeling or action, that it is not of the Spirit but of the flesh. Then, immediately, instantly, repudiate it. Do not argue with it, do not try to resist it. Put it out of your life at once. The failure is not in the flash of feeling; it is allowing one's self to "entertain" it. Soon such thoughts, such feelings, such purposings will leave, hardly to return. Of his own experience Paul testifies, "**I die daily**" (I Corinthians 15:31). Every Christian, wishing to prove his death with CHRIST a practical reality, will discover this daily necessity.

2 -- Refuse every claim of the world. The world has many artful ways of seducing the beloved of the Lord. Christian must recognize them as of the world and as aimed at breaking the bond of love and devotion between him and his Lord.

The more quickly and decisively we refuse every claim of the world upon us, the sooner will we build a barrage of protection against it. We establish our position on His Side of the cross. The world ceases to invite us; the world ceases to expect us. We are becoming free!

3 -- Keep a clear channel between yourself and CHRIST. Let likeness to CHRIST be your one aim in life; nothing of self-interest or pre-occupation can be allowed ever to side-track you. Such likeness comes only by close, constant association. Ours is a life of fellowship with CHRIST (1 John 1:3). Should sin break the fellowship, confess it at once (vs. 9) and the channel will be cleared.

Exalt CHRIST every day in every way. Never deny Him. Think CHRIST. Talk CHRIST. Be able to say, "I have allowed no cloud between me and my Lord. To me to live is CHRIST!"

Friend of mine, on which side are you:

Our Side? His Side?

~ end of book ~

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