

Discipling and Counseling Others

Sunday School 06/23/24 (wk11)

Instilling Christian Identity

Introduction

What would you say if someone asked, “Who are you?”? Would you give them your name, your age, ethnicity, sex? If they asked for more information, would you proceed to describe yourself by where you live, your occupation or career. Would your parents, spouse, children, or your last name bear any weight on your identity?

For most of us, I hope being a Christian would make the top of our list. But, what does one mean when they say, “I am a Christian”? For many evangelicals today being a Christian is solely based on an experience or an encounter where they repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. While our conversion experience is a wonderful gift from God, he has not left us there to just remember an event that happened 10, 20, or for some even 50 years ago. God is not impersonal, changing our hearts and then moving on to the next convert, but he is working in our lives each and every day to make us more like him.

Too many seeking counsel or needing discipling forget all they have received in Christ, they have actually forgotten who they are. Many Christians at one time or another face some form of an identity crisis. What kind of affect can your loss of your Christian identity have on your life?

2 Peter 1:9 – For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

These qualities the Apostle Peter just gave in vs 8 are fruit of the Christian life proving one's call and election in verse 10. But Peter here presents a category of one who has been “**cleansed from his former sins**” (clearly a Christian), but has forgotten who he is and thus is “**ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**” which we see in vs 8.

This is a Tragedy for a Christian life and the exact opposite of our goal in discipleship. As we said last week our goal is

-That those we disciple will “**grow in the grace and knowledge of our**

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)

So, how can we tell when someone is cleansed from their former sins but live unfruitful lives? What does a life ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ look like? Well, perhaps it could be a professing Christian with a life full of bitterness or one who is constantly resistant to authority. But whatever the issue, their lives are not producing the good fruit you would expect from someone who possesses the full rights and privileges of being a child of God.

So what is the remedy? How can we help those we disciple see their true identity in Christ? Let us run to God's Word! I believe 2 Peter 1:3-11 will benefit us as we not only seek to disciple others to the truth but also as we seek to convince our own hearts of what we have received in him. Let this text rain over you, let it guide you, and master you.

2 Peter 1:3-11 -

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I would like to discuss this text under 3 headings.

- 1. -Who God is**
- 2. -What he has done for us**
- 3. -Who he has made us to be**

1. Who God is

Who is God and is there value in knowing him? Peter surely thinks so. In vs 3, he says that just by knowing God we are granted all that we need for life and godliness. He continues in vs 8 by saying that if we strive to grow in these qualities mentioned in vs 5-7 then our growing knowledge of God will be fruitful. Peter demands that we know God, we are blind if we do not. Peter is not speaking of knowing facts about him but that we truly personally know him. But how can one personally know God? The undeniable testimony of Scripture is that we know God through the person of Jesus Christ!

Colossians 1:15-17 – “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Do you see this? Jesus is God! God has chosen to reveal himself to us in Christ. Peter describes God the Father’s affirmation of Jesus at the transfiguration beginning in vs 16 of 2 Peter 1.

2 Peter 1:16-18 - “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.”

If one wishes to know God, they must know Christ his beloved son. In John 14:6 Jesus says, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** So if we must know God then we must know Christ.

What does our text tell us of him? Peter declares him **righteous** in vs 1, he speaks of his **divine power, glory, and excellence** in vs 3, his **divine nature** in vs 4, his **Kingship** in vs 11, and his **majesty** in vs 16. Jesus is all together lovely! One does not meet Jesus in this way and not change. No wonder Peter throughout this letter time after time speaks of growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! To know him is to be changed!

But as we begin to know Christ we are confronted with the reality of our identity before Christ. Look with me at the end of **2 Peter 1:4**, “**having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.**” This was our condition before we met Christ. Each and every one of us not only lived in a corrupt world but loved it because of our sinful desires. But we have been “**cleansed from**” our “**former sins**” (**2 Peter 1:9b**). How? “**But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved**” (**Ephesians 2:4-5**).

If we wish to disciple someone to godly living then we must bring them to Jesus. As we spoke last week, seeking to fix the bad fruit of someone's life by addressing the bad fruit is bypassing how God changes people. They must have an encounter with Jesus, he must reign supreme and uproot those bad roots and replace them with good roots so that they may bear good fruit.

2. What He Has Done For Us!

-If we are in Christ, we have “**obtained a faith of equal standing with**” Peter from vs 1. But how did we get this? We did not earn it, we were full of sinful desires. Peter says in verse 1, “**by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:**” (**2 Peter 1:1b**).

-Christ bought us with his own blood, based on the merit of his own righteousness, and not to just save us but to richly bless us. By what Christ has accomplished in his life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension we have been “**granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness**” (**2 Peter 1:3**). What a blessing, **ALL** things! Everything we need for life and godliness has been placed in our storehouse, we are beyond rich!

-But, what does Peter mean by “life” and “godliness”?

-**LIFE** - This life Peter speaks of he refers to again in vs 11.

2 Peter 1:11 – “For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

-Peter is speaking of Eternal Life! By what Christ has accomplished he has granted eternal life to us and all who believe. But not just eternal life but eternity in Heaven with Christ. We were dead in our trespasses and sins but we are now made alive in Jesus Christ our Lord! We are no longer slaves to death and sin. We are alive in Christ!

-Godliness – What does Peter mean here when he says godliness? I believe he is making a point that not only has God granted the right to eternal life but also the ability to live like one who has received eternal life. No longer are you a citizen of this world but you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. And God has granted us the ability to live like it. The word “godliness” actually takes up residence in his list of fruit the believer should live and grow in.

2 Peter 1:5-8 – “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.”

-These qualities have been purchased for the believer and we should live in them. Like many lists of the New Testament Epistles, I don't believe Peter is trying to give an exact code or exhaustive checklist that must be checked in the exact order he has written but these qualities and others like them will color the progressive sanctification of the life of a believer. He has richly blessed us with these gifts of godliness and we should **“make every effort”** as vs 5 says to live them out.

- Look with me at vs 4, Christ has also **“granted to us his precious and very great promises,” (2 Peter 1:4)**. But what are these precious and very great promises? Let's first look at their source. If we look at vs 3 we see that these precious and very great promises come to us by God's own glory and excellence. It is because God is glorious and excellent or good that we receive these promises. They flow directly out of who God is.

-But we also see something unique here. These are not just any promises that flow from who God is, but they are precious and very great. When Peter speaks of these promises as very great, he is referring to their magnificence.

Their grandness! These promises are abundantly great. But they are also precious promises. Peter's description of preciousness is like the preciousness of a fine diamond. A museum-quality diamond. More precious than fine gold if you would.

-God has done much for us. We are rich, too rich to live like homeless and needy beggars, but too many of us do.

- If we are to disciple others then we need to help them realize what God has done for them. All that he has provided for them to receive not just in the world to come but the one they are presently living in. They are abundantly rich in Christ!

3. Who He Has Made Us To Be!

-When we encounter Christ, we are made a new. We are new creations in Christ.

The promises we just mentioned in vs 4 are so great and precious that they actually begin to take effect on those who receive them. Look with me at vs 4 again, **“so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature,”**.

-Peter here is not referring to the gaining of the divinity of any believer, but the reality of being in Christ! We receive a new heart, a heart ruled by God and no longer our sinful desires. Our loves and desires change. We begin to resemble Peter's description in vs 5-7. We start to live out of the inheritance we have been given as children of God. By beginning to understand who God has made us to be, he opens the store house and we begin to realize more and more just how rich we are in Christ. He has given us all the things we need to live for him.

-vs 10 -calling and election

- how does one do this? Vs 5-7

- who are we confirming it to? God-no, others-perhaps. But really to ourselves. These fruits bore out in our life testify to us that we are elect. This is a wonderful kindness of God. He knows our frame and how quick we are to forget, how insecure we can become. We are rich in Christ, may we live like it.

-May we lead others to see who they are in Christ. Identity realized changes one's life. May this text and many others lead them to get beyond their identity crisis and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Questions

1. What are some ways that knowing who God is will strengthen us to live for him?
2. Do we ever graduate from needing the Gospel to remind ourselves of this? Why not?
3. What are some ways we can be an accountability partner to those seeking to make their call and election sure?

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