

"In this world we are like Jesus" (1John 4:17)

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

That we are *like Jesus* is a very bold statement which John makes concerning authentic followers of our Lord. The apostle begins his proclamation in this verse with a pointed purpose: "*By this, love has been perfected with us in order that we may have confidence on the day of judgment.*" Strip away what the religious establishment has emphasized to be important in your Christian walk, and prayerfully reflect on this necessary truth: that *love is made complete among us* so that we'll have confidence on the day of judgment. "*Because as Jesus is, so we are in this world.*" What would happen in your inner person if you take this challenge seriously? Would you be encouraged by it? or, convicted because in your own life you've misrepresented our holy and compassionate Lord? If you find the Holy Spirit focusing you on being transformed, being sanctified from your old self to being earnest in growing into the character qualities of our Lord Jesus, then you're in a good place. Isn't this what we are being encouraged to focus on?

"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2Corinthians 3:18).

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

In these verses you'll notice that in your ongoing transformation by the indwelling Holy Spirit ♥ you are becoming more and more like our glorious Lord. And don't forget that every time you repent — stopping in your tracks and turning away from attitudes and actions that are unChrist-like — you are taking another step in becoming like Him. This is why it's crucial that you don't hold onto unconfessed sin. And, in being like Jesus ♥ your life is committed to a *way of life in the Lord* which is good and acceptable in fulfilling the will of God. As the indwelling Spirit reveals your Father's specific will for you, and you in loving trust obediently do it, you are verifying that by grace you are becoming like Jesus Who also came to do His Father's will (Matthew 7:21; 12:50). And being like Jesus and manifesting His love for others in this world is the confidence each of us must harbor *before* the day of judgment.

"Where's Jesus in all this?"

For many years we've been downhearted at times because it's been so rare for us to find others who speak from the ***preeminent centrality of Jesus*** in their way of life. Non-existent are the distinguishing identifiers of His Lordship in their lives, such as the miraculous taking place around them, and His Spirit's divine interventions and awesome timings which we've previously written about. For most churched people, the religious establishment has trained them to not even expect to live this way. We remember a particular gathering we visited many years ago. After spending some time listening to and observing the people, Mike asked, "*Where's Jesus in all this?*" Someone quickly responded in a voice tinged with sorrow, "**He's not here.**" So if Jesus doesn't "show up" in a gathering of Christians, why are they getting together?

Tragically, too many "Christians" are deceived by any of the various forms of Satan's misplaced emphasis on religious creeds, rituals, programs, size of their congregation or popularity of their clergy. And these people are the most difficult to convince that they lack the preeminent central significance of the Lordship of Jesus in their lives. Prayerfully consider three possible contributing factors that keep many from experiencing the life in the Spirit that our

Lord requires of His own. (At the end of this letter you'll find a story which we hope will inspire you to live as Jesus with His Lordship preeminent in your life.)

1. We've written before about a close friend who was addressing a congregation in England. He asked them, "If Jesus were dead, how long would you go on meeting together?" The congregants talked among themselves and replied, "We'd just keep going on as we do now."

Every religious establishment takes on a life of its own even without the presence of Jesus. The social system within it can make **complacent mediocrity** all that matters to those who are part of it! If this has been your experience, you're going to need resolute determination in asking the Holy Spirit for the grace to change, and that you'll obey His guidance. He's going to take you where you haven't been before — to a way of life in which you are intentionally determined by His grace to be *more like the Lord you love!* And if the Spirit leads you out of a religious system, don't look back (Luke 9:62; Hebrews 13:12-15).

2. The Apostles Creed, written about 300 years after the birth of Christ, summarizes foundational Christian tenets. It's been used both as a statement of faith by many denominations and sects. In a sense the creed is a *passive statement of beliefs* because it defines nothing about *how our Lord Jesus would have a person live that is good and acceptable* to Him. In the centuries that followed, the various "Church Councils" which were dominated by **anti-Semitic theologians and religious leaders** contrived the oodles of opposing creedal beliefs which now divide and fragment Christianity. In their errant methodology these theologians even relegated Jesus to a *belief, a historical fact*, rather than espousing a personal life-long commitment of love-grounded obedient trust in Him as Lord. You've heard the adage, **"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result."** This describes the misguided nature of these Councils over the centuries. They failed to return to the biblical **Hebraic foundations** which define a way of life and guided our Lord's earliest followers. Satan intruded by deceiving each Council into contriving belief systems which opposed previous ones, convincing the participants that they were more correct than those from whom they divorced themselves.

Maybe more of the world would be following our Lord Jesus today *if* the focus was on biblical truths that guide and enable a person to be *as Jesus in the world*. When you read our Lord's teachings and the writings in the Epistles, you find that they focus on a way of life that seeks to glorify our heavenly Father by fulfilling His purposes under the Lordship of Jesus. If you want to have confidence on the day of judgment, don't allow yourself to appraise yourself by what misled theologians and religious leaders emphasized as essential for you to adhere to. Rather, scrutinize your motives and values and actions and way of life, because *they reveal your true identity: Are you like Jesus?* Consider what our Lord Jesus is telling you in His parable about taking action by building on the immovable and unchanging rock:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock" (Matthew 7:24,25).

James affirms our Lord's words when he writes, *"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by works, is dead. ... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:17, 26).* You can never earn heaven by your actions. **But** your Christlike actions which are done through a heart of loving trust *because you are like Jesus* in the world give you assurance for the coming day of judgment. For further understanding of the difference

between *creedal beliefs without actions* and a *trust that's evidenced by your actions*, read our January, 1997 Newsletter, ***Orthodoxy vs. Orthopraxy***.

3. The times in which we are living could be described as "**The Age of the Theatrical**" — people portraying a ***guise of being genuine or authentic***. We live in an age in which people expect and even delight in being deceived. Today Isaiah would certainly bemoan, "*truth is fallen in the street*" (59:14). Deception has eliminated truth and integrity in this nation, even preventing many Christians from being honest about themselves. If scores of Christians evaluated themselves truthfully, you would see widespread repentance throughout faith communities in this country. And even more telling, our Father would be answering their prayers on behalf of this nation. However, honesty and turning from sin to walk God's way doesn't seem to be happening. Deceit is an entrenched part of society, whether from the White House and other government officials, to the universal false advertising all around us, to individuals who share a false portrayal of themselves in social media. The pitiful outcome of all this deceit? Those who are being deceived soon learn to become adept deceivers themselves.

What the ***pretense and guise of being genuine and authentic*** has accomplished within Christianity today is especially propagated by the "**conservative**" **political/religious establishment**. Satan has deceived all too many into believing they are more biblical and righteous than the liberals are, and therefore more accepted by God. Satan's ploy of **hate-saturated righteous indignation** overflows to numerous people of influence within conservatism. "Christian" conservatives completely overlook the far more crucial characteristics of *being Jesus in the world* — ***love, forgiveness*** and ***compassion*** for others. For anyone to be bitter against or to despise and demean an individual for whom our Lord Jesus died is the stench of Satan himself as he shows his evil through the scorner. In our holy Father's sight, your decision to hate a fellow human being translates into hating Him as well. (See 1John 4:20.) Anyone who considers him/herself a follower of Jesus can't rely on their own perceived "goodness" when they pridefully look down on anyone else for whatever reason. James warns people he calls "brothers" about judgmental actions which emanate from evil thoughts: "*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it*" (James 2:10). So-called *righteous indignation* is really "stone throwing" by a sinner who can't see their own sin!

Please take this warning to heart: Don't ever allow yourself to falsely believe, "**I'm a better person than those people are.**" It's a demonic trap which keeps so many Christians from being the redemptive outreach of Jesus. The real issue in this nation isn't political or even moral. Rather, it's the widespread failure of Christians to have Christ as preeminent in their lives. Christians could accomplish far more for their Lord as His ambassadors if they would turn from what's sin in Father's sight and walk instead as Jesus would have them. When conservatives take the log out of their own eye, they can deal with helping unbelievers and "liberals" put their trust in Lord Jesus. Consider this lesson when you fall short of the redemptive attitude of Jesus toward another person, race, or culture:

Two businessmen were to meet at an airport to fly to another city. The first to arrive was five minutes late and missed the flight. The second arrived an hour late and also missed the flight. In righteous indignation the first man severely reprimanded the second one for being so late — yet they both missed the flight!

This scenario is conservatism against liberalism. It's demonically political — and certainly not Jesus! So be careful if your negative attitudes get aroused and you fail to be as Jesus with another individual. Instead, start praying for that person. For more on the evil of righteous

indignation as a rallying point for conservatives, please read our 7/7/2020 Prophetic Insight, ***Sharing Inconvenient Truths Takes Courage (Part 2)***.

"Are you Jesus?"

A story to inspire your heart.

The Apples

(Author Unknown, November 14, 2006)

Several years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives that they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night's dinner. Well, as such things go, one thing led to another. The sales manager went on longer than anticipated and the meeting ran overtime. Their flights were scheduled to leave out of Chicago's O'Hare Airport, and they had to race pell mell to the airport. With tickets in hand they barged through the terminal to catch their flight back home.

In their rush, with tickets and briefcases, one of these salesmen inadvertently kicked over a table which held a display of baskets of apples. Apples flew everywhere. Without stopping or looking back, they all managed to reach the plane in time for their nearly missed boarding. All but one. He paused, took a deep breath, got in touch with his feelings, and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned.

He told his buddies to go on without him, waved good-bye, told one of them to call his wife when they arrived at their home destination and explain his taking a later flight. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the terminal floor. He was glad he did. The 16-year-old girl was totally blind! She was softly crying, tears running down her cheeks in frustration, and at the same time, helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her, no one stopping, and no one to care for her plight.

The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them into the baskets, and helped set the display up once more. As he did this, he noticed that many of them had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket. When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, "Here, please take this \$20 for the damage we did. Are you okay?"

She nodded through her tears. He continued with, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly." As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, "Mister..." He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, "Are you Jesus?"

He stopped in mid-stride, and he wondered. Then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul: "*Are you Jesus?*"

One more time: "Are you Jesus?"

Would people see Jesus in you? That's our destiny, is it not? To be so much like Jesus that people can't tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love, His life and His grace. If we claim to know Him, then we should live, walk and act as He would. Knowing Him is more than simply quoting scripture and going to church. It's actually living with His character qualities as life unfolds day to day. You are the apple of His eye even though you, too, have been bruised by a fall. He stopped what He was doing and picked you (and us) up on a hill called Calvary and paid in full for our damaged fruit. Let's start living like we are worth the price He paid. ***Start today!***

Mike & Sue