

From the March 4, 2008 Issue

## **Who are You?**

Have you ever wondered, “Who am I?” “Why do I exist?” “Why am I here?” “What am I supposed to be doing?” or, “What will happen to me after I die?” Of course you have!!!

This is why books such as Rick Warren’s bestseller “The Purpose Driven Life” fly off the bookshelves and into millions of homes. Who could honestly look in the mirror and not ask “Who in the World Am I?!”

Our calling is to respond to the question with a fundamental, biblical answer based on the cardinal Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation of the Son.

Let’s look at 2 Corinthians 5:13-21. What is interesting to note about this particular passage is how Paul addresses who the Corinthians really are, and by extension, who we are also as human beings. Paul does something very differently than we do when addressing the question “Who are we?”

We tend to think of ourselves in isolation or separation from God, with a need to get connected to Him. Whereas there is a real distinction between humans and God, Paul is clear that there is no distinction we have as humans that is not already in union with God in Christ!!!

It sounds kind of crazy because of how we typically think, but Paul even addresses the craziness of how it sounds. Let’s break it down into its foundational points. You can follow along in your bible as you read these comments on the scripture:

*2 Cor. 5:13* Paul is basically saying, “If it sounds like we are out of our minds with this Good News we are preaching, it is for God (We are willing to sound crazy for God!) If we are in our right minds as we express this message, this is for your encouragement. The Gospel, though radical sounding to the human mind, is encouraging through and through.”

*2 Cor. 5:14* Paul is saying “The love of Christ urges us to preach this Good News to you and we’re convinced that this is what it is: You are so connected to Jesus Christ that whatever happened to him, happened to you! When Jesus died, all of humanity died! When Jesus rose, we all rose! We no longer recognize anyone according to the flesh (or how they act, their idiosyncrasies, their race, ethnicity, sex, etc.), we see everyone more accurately in Jesus Christ. God did this so that we would no longer live to ourselves, like isolated human beings, wondering who we are, instead we could praise Him and live knowing Who we REALLY are in Jesus.”

That is NOT how most of us typically think about our lives or answer the question, “Who are we?” is it? In the West, we tend to see ourselves as so distinct from God that unless we do something to get connected to God (admit we’re sinners, believe, repent, pray, study the bible, etc.) then we think we will be forever separated from God. Paul is convinced of the truth – we are all connected to God in Jesus, the Son of God. He is convinced of this because He is an Apostle that understood that it is in Jesus, the Son of God, that all things “live, move and have their being” (Acts 17:28).

There is no such thing as being separated from God. This is where the importance of holding to

the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation come in to play. The doctrine of the Trinity says that God is one God in three persons, Father, Son and Spirit, who are so intimate with each other and so in unity that it would betray their union to think of them as anything less than One.

However, The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. The Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son, and the Father and the Son are not the Holy Spirit. They each have distinct personalities but the same motives, intentions and love – the same Essence and Being.

Since we live, move and have our being in God the Son, it is impossible to think of humanity as being separated from the Godhead. This Son of God became human, without losing His divinity (John 1:1-18), and actually made the connection he already had with us even stronger!!

Here is a good human analogy of what we should understand about God. If God the Son was a “cup”, and He created creation to be “water inside the cup”, then whatever happens to the “cup” necessarily happens to the “water in the cup!” That is a good picture of how our connection with God actually works.

Jesus created us in Himself and sustains us in Himself. When the cup (Jesus) became human and lived, that is when the water in the cup (creation) actually became what it really was destined to be and when it REALLY had life.

When the cup went into the grave, the water inside the cup went into the grave with it. When the cup came out of the grave, the water inside the cup came out of the grave, too! When the cup (Jesus) went back and ascended to the Father and the Spirit, the water inside the cup (creation) ascended to the Father and the Spirit in Him! Whatever happens to the Cup MUST necessarily happen to the water inside the cup!! That makes sense, doesn't it?

That is what the Apostle Paul understood so well and is explaining in these scriptures. One thing should be pointed out about this analogy. We are NOT so swallowed up in God and everyone else that we have no distinction. That would be New Age philosophy!

We are our own distinct selves connected to the rest of creation in Jesus! We will always be distinctly individuals, AND yet, we will always be in union with God. That is how God is, and that is how we will be!!

If God the Son already had union with us when He was only the Son, then what happened when He literally came into His Creation as human (which He will be forever)? It means that now humanity's connection with God, in the Son, is Eternal, Permanent and even more strong!! How is that for Good News?

*2 Cor. 5:17-19* Paul goes on to clarify in these verses that EVERYTHING has been made new due to it's connection with Jesus, God's Son made flesh!! This is a gracious gift from God that was not earned nor ever could be! Neither is it a gift that can be turned down or changed, even though it can certainly be opposed and rejected in our distinction.

What we should really love about verse 19 is that right when certain people want to make this sound like something that has only happened to Christians, Paul sticks like glue to the Gospel and states explicitly that what Christ did was something done to the entire world, NOT just Christians! Everyone in the world has his or her being in Jesus!

God, the Trinity, is not counting anyone's trespasses against them, and we, the Church, or those who believe this Good News, are supposed to be telling everyone about this marvelous reconciliation that has happened between God and Man in Jesus!! We needed reconciliation because we had come to believe the lie that God was somehow against us, when God never has been against us!

Do you see why the bible is filled with so many commands to repent and believe the Good News? This is exactly how you should understand "faith" and "repentance" in the bible. God already saved everyone in the Whole World in our connection with Jesus, God's Son, but we can only experience this Salvation as truth when we believe it as truth!! If we don't believe we are New, even though we really are New, then we can't live and act like we are New.

We are like a dog that is bound without a leash! We can only live in the pain, lies and misperceptions that bring on a condition called, well, hell! Our beliefs are VERY important for experiencing the Truth!

In a very real sense, there is no such thing as an "unbeliever." Everybody believes something, usually very strongly! We either believe the Truth that we are connected to Triune God in Jesus, OR, we believe the lie that our sins are keeping us disconnected from God. If we believe the Truth, we actually experience a foretaste of all of our blessings in Jesus. If we believe the lies, then we are probably on a religious treadmill of trying to earn or work our way back into God's favor so that we can "get blessed" or "stay blessed", or we have given up the facade all together and are trying to have all of the fun we can before we "go to hell!"

*2 Cor. 5:20-21* Admittedly, there are other verses in the bible, written by Paul, that seem to state the very opposite of the truth of all of humanity's union with God in Christ, such as in this very passage where Paul says that we are to encourage people to "be reconciled."

There is really a very simple key to reconciling passages of this type. Please notice that Paul says "be reconciled" NOT "get reconciled."

You will notice this with other verses about salvation, too, such as 2 Tim 2:3-6. Triune God's desire, and His desire through Paul, is that we believe who we really are in Jesus, so that we can "be that."

Have you ever seen someone involved in a sports game that wasn't playing up to their potential, and maybe you or someone else encouraged them to get "in the game," or to, "get their head in the game?" The person was REALLY in the game but something was so obviously wrong in their thinking and game play that we actually made the accusation that they weren't in the game (even though they really were!!)

That is exactly what is going on in the scriptures! It is one thing for something to be true; it is a whole other thing for something to be EXPERIENCED as truth!! This is why the bible urges us to repent. Repent comes from the Greek word "metanoia" and literally means to "re-think" or "think again."

We have believed lies, or simply been in ignorance about who we really are. The gospel encourages us to rethink and believe the Truth, or Good News, so that we can experience that

joyous Truth in our distinction!

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