

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2 ESV)

14TH JULY 2013

WHAT IS YOUR IDENTITY?

GALATIANS 2:20

[Dr. John Joseph

DYING TO SELF & LIVING UNTO GOD.....

Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

The way to really live is by choosing to lay down our lives. Jesus says that if you have found your life, you have lost it and if you have lost your life, you have found it. Many times the disciples could not comprehend what Jesus was trying to say. They couldn't comprehend the depth of what He was saying. If you try to find your life in the way you are trying to find it, at the end of the day, you will stay empty. **Unless you are crucified with Christ, you will never really find life, because in your dying is the living of your life.**

Col 3:3, 4 –“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

Your appearing in this world actually happens through the appearing of Christ. Your declarations to the world that God is doing something precious and powerful, happens by the revelation of Christ in your life. Life really begins when you find your identity of who you are. When you do not know who you are, you try to find identity in what you do. Once the identity that you are the child of God comes in place, you begin to find why you are alive. **When you find your identity, the purpose why God has sent you here makes sense.** Every day your life begins to carry meaning, because it is in Him. Your very identity is hidden in Christ. When your identity is hidden in Christ, if somebody insults you, they insult Christ. It is because, before you are ever revealed, Christ has to be revealed.

What does it mean to die for Christ? God is saying that your appearance has a lot to do with the appearance of Christ. **The appearance of Christ is the revelation of Christ, which means as Christ begins to grow in you, you begin to be revealed to the world according to God's**

full plan. Your revelation to the world of who you are is alongside how much you allow Christ to appear in you. If Christ is not appearing, then what is appearing is your flesh man.

Colossians 1:26-29 – *“that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labour, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me”*

It says that His greatest desire is to present every person mature in Christ. The will of God is not only to bless us, but also to mature us. There are different kinds of believers and unbelievers. One kind of believer is the **carnal Christian**, who says that he believes in Jesus Christ, but represents the lifestyle of the devil. His carnality or flesh is not brought in subjection to the Holy Spirit. He is born again and the spirit has come to life, but he does not know how to say 'No' to himself. He does not know how to control himself. Babies are the ones who cannot control themselves. Christians who cannot control themselves are like babies. One of the marks of maturity is the ability to tell 'No' to oneself.

If you want to be a disciple, you have to learn to be crucified with Christ. So when you are crucified with Him, when He appears, you appear with Him. One of the areas in which people find it difficult to be crucified with Christ is the area of handling offenses. God sends people in your life so that you can grow. Who you are will determine how you handle conflicts. Some people are carnal Christians and some are spiritual Christians.

Among the carnal Christians, there are the **immature carnal Christians** and the **mature carnal Christians**. There are also **immature spiritual Christians** and **mature spiritual Christians**. There are some unbelievers who are immature. They are carnal people and in that carnality, there is an immaturity. Carnal means that you have trained yourself to enjoy the flesh. Neither a carnal life nor an immature carnal life will fulfill the plan of God in your life. God wants you to move on from there in your life. There is the **mature carnal**. They have trained themselves in the flesh in certain things. They are wise and worldly, but unlike the immature carnal Christians.

There is the **immature spiritual Christian**. They are born again and they love Jesus, but they do not train themselves to walk with God. They have the love of God in their hearts. Then there is the **mature spiritual Christian**, which is the will of God. Anything short of that is an empty life.

John, the Baptist said that He must increase and he must decrease.

Luke 7:18 - 30 – *“The disciples of John reported to him about all these things. Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?” When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, ‘Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’” At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind. And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.” When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces! But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,*

*‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’*

I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God’s justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.”

John the Baptist was arrested and put in prison. Jesus started preaching after John got arrested. Jesus’ ministry started at where John left off. Soon after the water baptism of Jesus, John was arrested. John might have been arrested in the forty days period while Jesus was in the wilderness. It means that John did not see even one day of Jesus’ ministry. That is why John sent his disciples to find out whether He was the Messiah. Jesus told them to tell John that they have seen what was written in Isaiah being fulfilled. Jesus realised that John was offended with Him. When John baptised Jesus, he saw the Holy Spirit come upon Him and he knew that He was the Messiah. But the problem was that he had not seen even one day of Jesus’ ministry. He went to prison and was hearing reports from his disciples concerning the ministry of Jesus. He must have heard that Jesus was wearing good clothes, eating and drinking with sinners, while John used to be clothed in camel’s hair, would not drink wine nor even talk to sinners. John was offended because the ministry of Jesus was not like his ministry.

If you do not know how to handle offense, it can bring you down. Once you hold on to offense, which is the bait of Satan, you will not be able to leave it because you are hooked and neither would you want to leave it, thinking that it is food. Many people who are trained in carnal life get offended very fast. One of the things that Jesus wants you to grow into maturity is in handling offenses. The Bible says that offenses will come.

John asked if He really was the Messiah. But Jesus told his disciples to read Isaiah and decide. Then He looked at His disciples and spoke well about the one who was offended by Him. He said that among all born of woman, John was the greatest, which means that He was telling that John was greater than Abraham and Elijah. The Bible says that Daniel was the wisest of all wise men. But here it meant that John was greater than even Daniel. Jesus was talking about the most amazing man on earth, but that amazing man was offended with Jesus himself. The greatest of the Old Testament was offended with the greatest of the New Testament. Some of the most amazing people in the world may get offended with you. It is not because they are bad; it is because God is growing you, as you are of another covenant. There may be a group of people who may get offended with you.

Mark 3:21 – *“When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.””*

Jesus mother got offended with Him. She thought Jesus was insane. The two people who got the greatest revelation of Jesus got offended because of Him.

1 Corinthians 2:6 -16 - *“Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written,*

*“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,
AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,
ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”*

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may

know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.”

Wisdom is spoken to the mature. It says that He wanted to take this message to the mature and not to the carnal. If God were to tell an immature Christian about His plans for his life, the person may get offended about it. **You handle offense by knowing that you are crucified with Christ.**

Esau had a call from God, because every first born was the called one. Esau had a call and Jacob also had a call. Jacob wanted the blessing without the birthright. He teamed up with his mother, planned and got the blessing. As a result, for twenty years he had to be at Laban's house. Then he ran away from Laban. On his way back running away from Laban, he knew he had to cross Jordan to see Esau. Initially, he sent his sheep ahead, followed by his servants, followed by his concubines and their children. Then he puts Leah and her children behind them, followed by Rachel and her children and at the back was Jacob. But at Peniel, God had to battle with Jacob all night. God battled with Jacob to bless him. But before God blessed him, He asked Jacob a question, which was asked to him twenty years ago by his father, Isaac.

Genesis 32:2 -*“So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.””*

Genesis 3:1-3 - *“Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. He put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.”*

The first thing that he saw after Peniel was his enemy coming for him. After Peniel, he changed the order. God wants to raise males to become men. Before Peniel, he had put his children and wives in the front, but after Peniel, he went first. Twenty years later Jacob had the birthright, but his family was bowing down before Esau.

Genesis 33:8-11 – *“And he said, “What do you mean by all this company which I have met?” And he said, “To find favour in the sight of my lord.” But Esau said, “I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own.” Jacob said, “No, please, if now I have found favour in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favourably. Please take my gift which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have plenty.” Thus he urged him and he took it.”*

Jacob was saying that when he saw Esau, he saw God. When you look at your enemies, you should see the face of God. **God is calling you to die to self, so that He would have the most prominent place in your life.**