

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ARE WE?

2 Cor. 5:12 - 17

New Governor Helton told the people yesterday what kind of people Virginians ought to be. Refers to leadership Civil War days & of Webster's challenge.

INTRODUCTION:

Paul's definition of a Christian is the most dynamic to be found anywhere.

(If) any man - not a few people, not some who live by a standard of their own -

If any man be in Christ - in whose life is the great miracle of the New Birth.

He is a new creation - (New) is not to be understood as buying a new coat to replace an old one.

It is used in the sense of becoming a totally different kind of person.

At the moment of his new birth there has come to live within him a new life - because of this he is governed by a new principle, surrender to new objectives.

This is (not) a question of a man having reformed his life, nor of some new things that have been added to old things, not merely changing a few habits.

Paul says if any man be in Christ, he is a totally different kind of person.

This is the N. T. definition of a Christian.

Question comes - what kind of people are we?

V. 11 - We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

There are things about us which are self-evident - things we do not need to argue for them - they are manifest to God and we trust are manifest to others. My inner self is perfectly known to God and I hope to your consciences too.

V. 12 - We are not commending ourselves to others,

We are not boasting,

We are giving some reason for others to glory on our behalf - for there are some who simply judge by outward experiences and profession. They are not concerned with the state of the heart.

Repeat - what kind of people are we? What are some of the evidences?

I. People with a Constant Fervor - V. 14

V. 14 - God's people have a constant fervor - "The love of Christ constraineth us".

Big force in a Christian's life - moving compassion,

V. 13 - Some people thought Paul was mad - beside himself - I doubt if that troubled Paul. Festus said he was mad when testifying in his court.

Paul gives the reason of this fervor - the love of Christ - Not Paul's love for Christ!

The love of Christ is the love eternal having no beginning or ending. Love of Christ was long before the foundation of this world. He had nothing to gain by stooping from the throne to the manger.

The love of Christ - the highest place that heaven affords was His sovereign right, but he forsook it all and humbled himself and made himself of no reputation.

Love of Christ is so patient - it went on loving even though He came to His own and His own received Him not, yet He loved them to the end.

Love of Christ took him right to the cross and bared His heart to a spear and the sword of the justice of God that was buried in the body of our Lord Jesus.

Love of Christ took him through all the same, the reviling, the despisings, and as Paul sums it up in the last verse of this chapter, this is the love of Christ who was made sin for us.

Holy Spirit had shown this to Paul. It was no theory to Him. He had seen something of the glory of God's love and he knew it was this love that constrains

(Word, constrains) - difficult, translate from original into English - many meanings.

Could mean - the love of Christ (restrains) as the reins upon a horse hold him back, hold him in check, keep him in right path, guide him round the bend. Paul - love of Christ keeps me back from doing the thing that otherwise I would do, a thing that would bring shame.

Another - "The love of Christ (coerces me)".

(Jamison, Favatt, Brown), Com. says there is an irresistible object which has so controlled the life of a Christian that he lives with one objective in view to the elimination of any other possible consideration".

As a river is dammed up to restrain its power before it flows into the ocean.

Something has gripped the Christian and possessed him til the world says he is a fanatic.

Faith does it by love - love always blooms on the plant where faith has taken root in the soil of redemption. Where faith takes root, love springs up and bursts forth. This was the constant fervor in Paul's life. This tells what kind of people we are.

II. People With a Unique Identification - V. 14B-15

14B - He died for all.

The man who counts for anything in the world is a person controlled by one principle.

People who are something for a little while, then something else for a little longer, and nothing for very long are just like a jet stream which follows a jet plane and disappears in a moment; it does not count for anything.

Paul looked with spirit enlightened eyes into the heart of God - Christ's love gripped him, propelled him along one line in life.

Some will say this is an awful life for the Christian. Paul would answer he found that which he loved was the will of God. That which consumed his whole life and governed his life seven days a week.

There were no rivals in his life, therefore he was the happiest man in the world!

Some would say but this kind of religion is too emotional; but wait, this fervor springs from an identification - if one died for all, then were all dead!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude
In my place condemned He stood.
Sealed my pardon with His blood,
Hallelujah! What a Saviour.

He died for all - he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, Isa. 53:5.

Great fact of substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus is basic. Paul said I was involved in condemnation, guilt, sin, and judgement. I died with him, I was buried with him, I rose with him, my feet are upon the ground but my heart is in heaven - I am identified with Him.

Therefore his victory is my victory. His triumph over temptation is my triumph; his resources are my resources, his grace is my grace, his patience is my patience, his meekness is my meekness, I am one with Christ.

Paul said once poor, wretched, vile but one day in Jesus I died and from that moment I was free from the penalty and now I'm indwelt by a mightier power - this identity - thrill of redemption, a constraining force, burns in us because we have been set free from the blood of Jesus. Love of Christ pressures our lives along one way.

Maybe (one reason) why some no longer sing, "There's A Land That is Fairer Than Day" is because the next line says "and by faith I can see it afar". You have to have faith to see it and there isn't much of that now-a-days.

So a lot of people simply don't want to be convinced by faith because they don't want to give up their evil ways. No use arguing, something must happen on the inside.

III. People With a Two-Way Fellowship - V. 15-16

V. 15-16 He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died and rose again....

Note significance of these two verses.

Here is a fellowship that is recognized in the life of a man who is a new creation: a fellowship God ward and earthward.

V. 15 - Love of Christ for me has been answered in the heart which he has come in to dwell. Like a fire love begets love. Love of Christ shed abroad by the H. S. brings a response from the regenerate heart.

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope. It outlasts anything.

F. W. Faber - "I love Thee so, I know not how my transport to control, Thy love is like a burning fire within my very soul".

Is there in your heart such a fellowship?

Love has answered love - deep has called to deep.

We say to him:

My Jesus, I Love Thee,
I know Thou art mine,
For Thee all the follies
Of sin I resign.

V. 16 - Fellowship is also earthward -

"From this moment on, I do not estimate anybody by outward appearance".

If only the church could get hold of this today!

What does it mean?

The (old things) that marked our friendships and dislikes in our unconverted days put barriers upon our love and made forbidden areas, distinction of nationality and social levels.

Paul said we use to know Jesus like that - but not anymore. We have a Spiritual Union and oneness, which is far greater than the flesh.

In this way our fellowship among men is same way.

D.L. Moody - called men - Chicago to persuade him except that - "I could be just as good a Christian outside the church as in it" - Tongue - Blowing cool - set to one side - slowly go out - El Gre - neglect worship - lives becomes vacuum - fire of faith soon extinguished

IV. People of Total Transformation - V. 17

We ask what kind of people are we?

Constant fervor based on love.

Unique identification through His death.

Two way fellowship with heaven and fellow Christians.

And last total transformation.

V. 17 - People forgotten Spiritual obligations in their enjoyment of material luxury.

Some think they can do anything as long as they talk a little religious.

Some think any program for the Youth, if it is playing the fool is approved as long as they call it church.

If ever the Devil has done something to the church, he has done it today!

The mark of distinction of the child of God is total transformation - see in daily living.

"Any man in Christ is the work of a new creation - the old condition has passed by, a new condition has come".

It is not if any man be a new creature.

If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.

Newness springs from his being in Christ. Not the tree that makes the soil but the soil makes the tree.

"Transformation within" - through Christ.

Old guilt, passes.

Spiritual renewal of the inner man.

Transformation without - old things passed by - He is not surveying the land of his inheritance, he is like one who has already reached his glorious home.

To be in Christ.

How much is expected of us? *Men may doubt what we say, but they always believe what we do & what we are -*

What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?

How entire should be the separation between us and a world such as we live in?

What then should we have to do with sin and flesh and vanities.

How thoroughly transformed we ought to be. What kind of people are we?

Is there a power, something that has you in its grip, something that will push you through without any possible alternative?

It is the love of Christ?

That is the quality the church needs now for survival, in this hour of human history.

One thing cripple this nation - failure of Christians to be constrained by love of Christ.

Would you offer your life to Jesus today. "Lord, I am not worthy, but for Thy sake, I'm moved by a passion within that there be no rival claim outside the will of God.

I beseech you to consider your lighthearted living, put life in center of will of God.

Review the weaknesses in your life for the sake of your testimony.

Luther said when they demanded that he recant, "Here I stand; I can do no other".

Person in Christ.

Are you that kind of person?

Teens Crowds - Friday Night

Albert Long - won football, basket ball, baseball & track letters at U. of N.C. - His father passed away the night before -
Gave His Testimony - "I can tell you in 30 seconds" -

The moment "I decided to do God's will in my life,
I became a different person."