

Discovering Identification within the Revelation of Paul

I Corinthians 15:34 “Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame.”

The Identification of the Believer

I. The basis of this truth

A. The resurrection

- 1) The spiritual becomes natural
- 2) The natural becomes spiritual

II. The truth of identification through Paul’s letters

A. The inner-Acts books

- 1) Romans, chapters 5-8
 - a. By identification the believer is justified (justification)
 - b. By identification the believer is given victory over sin (sanctification)
 - c. By identification the believer is given hope in eternity (glorification)
- 2) All believers are made one through spiritual identification with Christ
Galatians 2:20 & 6:14

B. The post-Acts books

- 1) The believer has the fullness of God in him
Ephesians 4:20-24 & 5:10,17 Colossians 1:19-28

III. Review: what has been said

A. The believer is made alive in the spirit by the resurrection of Christ.
I Corinthians 15:44

B. The believer is made perfect through identification with Christ

- 1) He is justified, Romans 5: 9
- 2) He is sanctified, Romans 6: 22
- 3) He is glorified, Romans 8: 30

C. The believer has Christ in him, Colossians 1:27

Conclusion: Why some believers have not this knowledge of God

Introduction:

We have been looking at progressive revelation within the revelation of Paul. Progressive revelation is the movement of truth through time. Paul kept learning new truth throughout his life in a progressive manner, as revealed to us by a chronological study of his writings. We have been pursuing the development of two primary truths within his teachings, that I consider the foundation of his latter revelation. They are the truth of the resurrection, and the identification of Christ and the believer as a result of faith in the resurrection.

In the last message we looked at the third letter of Paul, I Corinthians. In the fifteenth chapter of this letter Paul refutes the Gnostics by explaining more fully the significance of the resurrection in the life of the believer.

I. The basis of this truth

A. Christ, by leaving the spiritual, identified with the natural. The believer, through faith in the resurrection of Christ, leaves the natural and becomes spiritual. The identification of Christ with the natural enables the believer to become a spiritual being made alive through faith.

The identification of the believer with Christ is based on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. I Corinthians 15: 49-50, & 15:34.

“And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”

It is through identification that the believer becomes alive spiritually! Because Christ the spiritual became natural, the natural believer becomes spiritual. Flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Paul learned that by identification with the gospel, the believer enters into a spiritual relationship with God that he did not have before. Those of corruption have put on incorruption. It is in this chapter of I Corinthians that Paul first presents this truth of identification; it is based upon the resurrection of Christ and the believer's hope, by faith, in it.

II. The truth of identification throughout Paul's revelation

In the writings of Paul, today's believer may learn many things in a progressive manner. One thing which should be remembered is that Paul had to learn things the same way that we do. One thing at a time; precept upon precept. Following his conversion, Paul also was a 'babe in Christ'. He needed to learn what the Lord had determined for him in a progressive manner. This is especially true in matters of doctrine. The word doctrine means teaching or instruction. Paul teaches us much in the area of relationships between the eternal God and his creation. At the beginning, Paul needed to be taught by the Spirit of God concerning what he was to teach to other believers. Paul had to have these things

revealed to him in a progressive manner. The Spirit had to teach him by building things unknown upon things known. We all learn this way.

In the letter of I Corinthians, the third letter written by Paul, certain important truths are presented for the first time. The first thing presented is the action of the resurrection upon the believer, I Cor.15:34

“Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame”

The believer is moved from a state of death to life, from a state of unrighteousness to righteousness. As a result of the resurrection the believer becomes what he is not in the natural state, he becomes spiritual, I Cor.15:44

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

Paul also presents the reason why these things occur in the life of the believer. This is because of the truth of identification of Christ with humanity, I Corinthians 15:22&49

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

The truth of the resurrection becomes effective in the believer through the truth of identification of the believer with the gospel. This is the action of God-given faith in the life of the believer!

A. The inner-Acts books

1) Identification in the book of Romans (chapters 5-8)

This truth of identification by faith, in the life of the believer, may be traced progressively in the letters of Paul written during the inner-Acts period. It occurs after I Corinthians, which is when I believe Paul first began to understand the concept of the identification of the believer with the gospel. This concept is taught in the book of Romans in chapters 5-8. This is important, because the book of Romans provides the foundation for the teachings of Christianity. It is in the book of Romans that the great teachings of Christianity are first clearly stated, and made real through the identification of the believer with Christ.

a. Justification

The believer is justified before God as a result of identification, Romans 5:1,10,17
“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

b. Sanctification

Through identification by faith the believer is enabled to be victorious over sin,
Romans chapter 5:19, 6:2,6

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

c. Glorification

It is through identification that the believer becomes free from the condemnation of God.
Romans 8:11a,14,15, 17,1

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

The greatest wealth of the believer is gained through identification with the finished work of Christ. The believer is justified, sanctified and glorified through faith. All of these things were brought to pass through the resurrection of our Lord!

2. Identification in the book of Galatians (2:20 and 6:14)

At this point, Paul has progressed in his knowledge concerning the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In the book of Romans the believer is seen as having all his needs concerning his relationship before God being met through identification with the gospel. He is justified, sanctified and glorified. His past sins, his present life, and his future standing have all been secured through his relationship with Christ in the gospel. As we come to the letter Paul wrote to the Galatians, several years have passed since Paul was first taught the principle of identification with Christ by the Spirit of God. He had spent considerable time in thought about it as may be seen in this letter.

At the time Galatians was written, God had revealed to Paul and to the twelve that Gentiles were also to be blessed by God through the gospel. There was some confusion concerning what their role was to be within the church. Christianity at this time had not been separated very far from Judaism; there was an ongoing struggle between the two.

In the letter to the Galatians, Paul reveals an understanding of identification which is deeper and more unifying than was previously understood. This may be seen by his

realization that all believers, Jews and Gentiles are to be made one in Christ. This is a spiritual union and has a deeper substance than the differences evident in the flesh. Galatians 3:22,26-28 and chapter 2:20

“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. For ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

With the combination of these verses, the movement into the realm of the spiritual is seen. I believe that the idea of identification is what is represented by the term baptism in these passages. This has to be a spiritual event performed on the believer by faith, and is the reason that Paul came to believe what he teaches in chapter 2: 20 of this book.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which now I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

This verse shows us what Paul had learned concerning the relationship God had with him as a believer. By the resurrection of Christ, Paul had been enabled to enter the spiritual realm with Christ. This is how Christ lived in him. His present life on this earth is the life that is identified with Christ; so much so that Christ lives His life through Paul. The spirit of Paul is become the Spirit of Christ. The two are identified with one another! This is why Paul could reach the conclusion of this letter with these words:

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”

Through identification with the gospel, the believer had entered the spiritual realm. The resurrection had brought the Son of God from the realm of the flesh to a realm entirely of the spirit. The believer is identified with the completed work of Christ, allowing him access to the realm of the spirit. Because these things had come to pass to the believer through faith, all believers were now in Christ. There remained no more division between those of Jewish nationality and those of the Gentile nations. There was unity between them in the person of Jesus Christ, and their identity with him through faith.

B. The post-Acts books

As the book of Acts comes to a close, Paul is directed by God to set the nation of Israel aside for their unbelief as a nation. This is recorded for us in the 28th chapter of Acts. By this time Paul knew that he had been identified with Christ, and that he no longer needed an association with the nation of Israel.

1) Ephesians 4:20-24 and 5:10&17, and Colossians 1:19-28.

I believe that this new unity is a result of the full understanding of the concept of identification of the believer with Christ. I have combined a few verses in the books of Ephesians and Colossians in order to show how this teaching is based upon the truth of identification. Ephesians 4:20-24, 5:10,17 and Colossians 1:19-28

“But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

The believer is reconciled to God through his identification with Christ. The believer is dead with Christ and has paid his debt to God for his sin. For he who knew no sin hath become sin for us. Through identification the believer has hope, and has been made perfect in the sight of God. Colossians 2: 13 “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

The use of the words dispensation, which means to dispense (in this case, the truth), and the use of the word now (which means present tense) in these verses are very important. I believe that Paul is referring to the revelation he had concerning the truth of identification of the believer with Christ. This is the new truth he was to reveal after the end of the Acts period. This fulfills the word of God, and that is Christ in you the hope of glory.

III. Review

The intent of this study was to show how Paul learned things progressively, throughout his life. We began in the 3rd letter written by Paul where he spoke of how the resurrection of Christ has made the believer alive in his spirit. This state of life in Christ Jesus is his, by identification, by faith in the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The believer is made complete, he is justified, he is being sanctified and he will be glorified by his identification with the gospel. The believer may grasp by faith the fullness of God in him, by putting into practice the fact that Christ, the hope of glory, is in him. The believer is made a completely new and perfect man.

Conclusion: Why some believers don't have this knowledge of God.

In the day in which we live, there seem to be many who don't have this knowledge of God.

One thing many are ignorant of is the truth of personal identification with the gospel. Few seem earnest in pursuit of the truth; they are satisfied with knowledge of the gospel, but do not seek after the wisdom of the gospel. Remember, wisdom is knowledge applied. Many are so busy serving their religion that they have not the time to seek after the wealth that is theirs in Christ. It is far better to know you have Christ, than to remain blindly bound to your religion.

If you are a believer today, the only thing that keeps you from believing the mystery of Paul's later revelation is your fear of believing God. A believer who doesn't have this knowledge of God should not rest until he comes to understand all that God has for him. God wants the believer to understand how he can be made complete in his Son!