

Times of Refreshing

Volume II Letter 9

By Daniel Yordy

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Dear Friends,

Christ in You, the Hope of Glory.

In this letter, I continue to address a teaching that claims that our human self is evil and must be put to death by us.

As I shared in my previous letter, I am human, created in the image of God to reflect His glory to the creation. Christ is in me. As a human, the center of my person is my heart. That is why the heart is the place chosen by Christ as His residence in me.

My old heart was desperately wicked. But that old heart — the old man — was put to death and a new heart was created in me when I was born again. At the same time, my spirit was also given life so that I could once more communicate with and operate in the heavenly side of the universe as a heavenly being at the same time as I am communicating with and operating in the physical side of the universe through my earthly body.

Body and Spirit

Now, let's look at verses that connect these two — body and spirit.

“And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” Paul — Romans 8:10

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Paul — 1 Cor. 6:19-20

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Paul — 2 Corinthians 7:1

What do we learn from these? One, our spirit, though it is life, must be “cleansed.” Two, there is something still very wrong with our bodies. Three, even though there is something still very wrong with our bodies, they belong to God who claims ownership, and in fact, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are to glorify God in our bodies.

Let's make this clear. Sin has its residence in our bodies. But God still claims ownership of our bodies and want us to use them to glorify Him.

Subject to God

Where are we in all of this? Is there part of us that cannot be subject to God?

NO! No, there is no part of our being that cannot be subject to God.

Where does the idea come from that there is in us some element of our being, our person, our makeup, our humanity, our self, that cannot be subject to God and therefore has to be crucified?

Romans 8:6-8 “For to be carnally (flesh) minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal (flesh) mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor ever indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

From these three verses comes the teaching that the “human” part of you cannot be subject to God and therefore must yet be put to death.

But I noticed something over the years, every time I heard this teaching (which was often), the reading always — always — skipped over verse 9 and did not read it or consider what role it may play in understanding this passage.

“But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwells in you.”

We can stand upon this word with all firmness and certainty. You, child of God, are not in the flesh. Although we are to bring every thought into “obedience to Christ” (2 Cor. 10: 5), our minds are fully capable of obedience and do not have to “die” as unacceptable to God.

Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind, and with all of your strength.”

Your heart is acceptable to God, and you are able to love Him through it.

Your soul is acceptable to God, and you are able to love Him through it.

Your mind is acceptable to God, and you are able to love Him through it.

Your strength is acceptable to God, and you are able to love Him through it.

Paul said, “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God,” (Romans 12:1) and he said, “Glorify God in your spirit and in your body, which are God’s.”

Our Human Parts

So, very quickly, let’s go through our various parts and see where each one fits in the process of redemption.

When we were born again, our old man, which I believe was a cross between our fallen spirit and our evil heart, was put to death, our spirit was made alive, and a new heart was created in us. At the same moment, Christ took up residence in our new heart, making Himself one with us.

Now that Christ is in us, we are going through the exercise of bringing every part of our soul and body — of me — into subjection to or alignment with Christ. Our minds, and by extension our wills and our emotions, are being “renewed,” with every thought, feeling, and decision being brought into the orbit of Christ who is in us.

The body itself still is subject to death because it yet has sin in it. The body will be the last part of us that will be fully redeemed in the resurrection (Romans 8: 23). However, in spite of the sin that dwells in the body, it is still the temple of the Holy Spirit and it, with all of its strength, is to be given to God as an acceptable sacrifice.

At the same time, the Holy Spirit, who claims our bodies as His temple is right now in the process of making them fully alive. “And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” Paul — Romans 8:11

So, if this is our present state, what then must be put to death?

“For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Paul — Romans 8:13

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” Paul — Romans 6:12-13

“that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” Paul — Ephesians. 4:22-24

“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication . . . (etc.) Colossians 3:5 Because our body still has sin in it, we are capable of doing things with it that are an offense to God. But the members that are capable of such things are to be “presented to God.” **It is the doing of evil things and the thinking of evil thoughts that must be put to death.** Nowhere does it say that the mind itself or the human person must yet be put to death.

Let’s look at it this way. I like my computer very much. It enables me to do so many things very easily. It also provides me with access to many things I would like to know. I quickly learned that I could do almost all college research on the Internet. However, I am also fully aware that there are two kinds of danger on the Internet. One is wicked sites, the other is viruses. The first cannot touch me unless I go looking for them, the second can come into my computer unexpectedly and I must be on my guard. I solve the problem of wicked sites simply by avoiding them. I don’t go there. They don’t exist as far as I am concerned. On the other hand, I fight against viruses by putting a wall of protection around my computer.

Our mind is the same. We learn to avoid engaging our mind with the evil things of this world by simply not going to those places. And we maintain a wall of protection to keep “viruses” or evil thoughts from demons out of our minds. But just as my computer is not “evil” just because I can access evil through it if I chose to, or just because it is subject to viruses if I do not protect it, neither is my mind.

Yes, at times I must cleanse my computer of problems, and in a similar way, I cleanse my mind by the blood of Jesus. The problem, though, is the physical and spiritual worlds I live in, not the computer or the mind itself.

And so, we are to “put off” the old man, who has become simply an outer garment that exists beyond our skin, beyond who and what we are and we are to replace that garment with the attributes

of the new man, which we are.

Jesus put it this way. As He washed the disciples feet, Peter protested at first, but then wanted a full bath. But Jesus made clear what Peter’s need was. “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean’ and you are clean, but not all of you.” (John 13:10)

The “not all of you” was a reference to Judas only, who had not given his heart to Jesus.

You, in all of your humanity, are clean. You are made clean by the blood of Jesus.

But as we pass through the course of this world, our members which are on the earth are still subject to the dirt of this world. We do not celebrate the dirt, nor hold onto it. But as we submit to Jesus and to one another, the dirt is tenderly washed off our feet by the Master or a brother who loves us and who honors us with great respect.

And when we see a brother whose feet are caked with mud, sitting next to a brother whose feet are only slightly dusted, we know that the first has passed through far greater difficulty getting to our home than the second, and so we honor him with greater honor because of the greater desire of his heart.

“He who is forgiven much loves much, but He who is forgiven little loves little.” Jesus

Human Consciousness

Let’s focus, now on this thing called “human consciousness.” In my previous letter, I quoted the writer who stated that human consciousness was not capable of being subject to God, but has to be put to death.

What does the New Testament teach about human consciousness?

The Greek word *suneidesis* is used 32 times in the New Testament. The King James translated the word always as “conscience.” But newer

translations occasionally translate the word as “consciousness.” How does anyone know what a word means? By consulting some primeval, perfect and complete dictionary? No. There is no original Greek dictionary, nor any original dictionary of any kind in any language. All dictionary writers determine what a particular word means by looking at the context in which the word is used and by attempting to interpret what the author meant by that word as he used it in that passage.

So, if you were to write out every passage where the Greek word *suneidesis* is found, as the writers of dictionaries do, what would you find? Having done so, what do you see? Of course, you will want to impose on the word “conscience” our modern definition. Don’t do it, let the word speak for itself from its context. First, we see that a person can have an evil or defiled conscience, and then we see that a person can have a good or pure conscience. We also see that the good or pure conscience is “toward God” and that the evil conscience (the Pharisees) is always looking towards sin.

Nowhere do we find support for the modern definition of a faculty of our human person that whispers in our ear, “this is good,” and “that is bad.” Yes, Hebrews 5:14 states that “those who by reason of use have their senses (not conscience) exercised to discern both good and evil.” But the word “conscience” and by it, human consciousness, is not the focus of this verse.

When we search a bit further, then, we discover that the concept of a “conscience” that says, “this is good,” and “that is bad,” was not a part of Jewish thinking at all. Rather, it came in later from pagan Greek thought as one of the many perversions that flooded into “Christianity” during the transition to Catholicism.

And so we find that we must set aside the modern English word “conscience” as being too encumbered with pagan definitions, and draw only from how the word is used in the New Testament. There we see that the word *suneidesis*

does fit our present word “consciousness” much better than the present word “conscience.”

When our human consciousness, then, is focused on God, it is called pure and good. When our human consciousness is focused on sin in ourselves or in others, it is evil and defiled.

Suneidesis is either good and pure or evil and defiled. Which is which is determined by the direction our consciousness is set.

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:19-22 (See also Titus 1:15 and 1 Peter 3:21)

Yes, we are to “put to death” the doing of wrong things and the thinking of wrong thoughts — sin. But the parts of us that are able to do those things, themselves belong to God and are to be presented to God with all the love of our hearts.

If you accept the teaching that some part of you (and maybe just about all of the human you) is unacceptable to God and therefore must be put to death, then you cannot and will not present that part of you to God. At the same time, your conscience will be defiled as you always suspect “evil” to be lurking in every part of your being.

This is not the teaching of the New Testament, and it is clearly contrary to the commandments of God. By a Biblical definition, those who are always searching for evil in their hearts have an “evil” conscience; whereas those who refuse to look for evil in their hearts, but look only towards God who has made them clean, have a “pure” conscience.

Every part of our human self we offer to God, knowing that we are clean and that every part of us is acceptable to God as a sacrifice of love.

Paul, of course, was accused of giving people a “license” to sin by his teaching. But God Him-

self is the original libertarian. Have you noticed that God never enforces His law nor makes people obey Him? God sometimes persuades and He ensures that the consequences of our decisions come to us, but He never forces. Why? Only what comes from love, from the heart, from a willing and desirous offering, is acceptable to God. He wants to win our hearts.

Christ in You

Christ in YOU. **Jesus, in the human me.**

Which is it? Something that does not yet exist, that we are working towards? Or something that already is, that we are becoming more and more aware of, particularly in our human consciousness?

“He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” Paul — 1 Corinthians 6:17

Christ in me does not replace me, He fills me! I am complete in Him!

We are, right now, one spirit with Christ. We are complete in Him. We, as members of His church, are the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Eph. 1)

“Christ in you,” “seated with Him in the heavens,” these are more than theoretical “positions” that hopefully may be true some day if we allow God to make them our “experience.” No, they are absolute reality right now.

Our job is to practice what is true — to “practice the presence of God.” We do not think, “Is this a work of the flesh?” (Paul says the works of the flesh are obvious — fornication, hatred, etc.) But rather, whatever we do, we do it out of love for God. If that is our consciousness, then those things that are offensive to God will quickly fall away.

We are not separate from Christ. I am not some “other” person. Christ is not in me as something separate from me. Yes, Jesus is Jesus, and I am me. But the oneness we share is complete.

Christ is not some “other” that I am trying to negotiate a correct relationship with. He and I are one. His heart beats in mine and mine in His.

Oftentimes, I am not aware of this reality. Often, I lose sight of it. Sometimes, I am very much afraid. None of that changes the reality of Christ in me. I am at all times one spirit with Christ. I do not make it so by a certain extent of “obedience.” Neither does my relationship with Christ rest upon the fickleness of my mind.

I live in a world at war. I am under constant assault by an enemy who hates and fears me. I walk through a world that is polluted. The mud of it splatters against my feet. If I live under any shadow of guilt. If I imagine, when my mind is cloudy, when my emotions are fearful, that I have somehow “left” Him, that He is now somehow separate from me and I must get “back to Him” by some exercise, I do not know the truth.

Christ is in me. I am in Him.

Jesus and I are one.

And as we live in this truth, we recognize also that Christ is in our brother and sister. And all that we do for them, we do for Christ.

We do not become one spirit with Christ, either by following a pathway of obedience or by putting to death the human part of us. We are one spirit with Christ, and we learn what that means as we walk together with Him. Then, out of that love relationship flows the fruit of obedience. But it is not an obedience of one person doing what another person says. Rather, it is simply the thing you do. **Everything you do, as you offer it up to God, becomes obedience.**

Oneness with Christ

I am not interested in some “new age” concept of Christ where everything is lovey-dovey and we are all part of some cosmic oneness.

The blood shed by a pure and spotless Lamb on Calvary is what cleanses us from sin and separates us from the evil of this world. It is that same blood that continues to cleanse us from sin as we walk in the light of His presence. I am convinced that those Christian who constantly search for evil in their hearts put less weight on that blood than they ought. The thing that allows the blood to work in us is that we are convinced it is sufficient. That conviction is called "faith." Without faith it is impossible to please God.

Furthermore, we are convinced by faith that we are one spirit with Christ.

So, what is our exercise then? What are we to do to win the victory in this world?

It is to **know Him**.

How many times do the Apostles and Jesus pray and exhort that we are to know Him, that our knowledge of Him is to increase without end?

If you see yourself as evil; if you see yourself as uncrucified; if you see yourself as separate from Him, you **cannot** know Him.

To know Him is much more than knowing about Him. In fact, unless we are one with Him, we can know nothing more than some things about Him. To "obey", in some mechanical, outward form, as a servant obeys his master, is to remain separate from Him.

So, on the one hand, I, with great comfort and assurance, lean my head against His breast, while on the other hand, I no longer see myself as separate from Him. But as I grow in knowledge of Him, I grow in knowledge of myself. And as I grow in knowledge of myself, I grow in knowledge of Him.

I am not in any way implying that I am Christ, but I am attesting that He, by filling my heart, has made Himself one with me.

You cannot find something unless you look for it

where it is. **You cannot know Christ, unless you find Him in your own heart.**

In my next letter, I want to share the vision that God has filled my heart with for many years. I believe it is time.

Please take the time to respond to the enclosed form. I would appreciate hearing from each one who is blessed by this letter.

May God bless you richly in the knowledge of Jesus the Savior. May He win your heart so utterly that there be no distinction between Him and you.

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Daniel Yordy
16 Uvalde Road 202D
Houston, TX 77015
daniel@dyordy.com