

In Christ, a New Creature

A message by Rev. A.W. Tozer on September 21, 1958

Now, in the fifth chapter of Second Corinthians, beginning with verse fourteen, for the love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead. And that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again. Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now, henceforth, know we Him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.

Now, Paul says here that he once knew Christ after the flesh. And this is not meant to be an answer to the scholar's dilemma, the problem of whether Christ and Paul had ever met in the flesh. He said that though we have known Christ after the flesh, and Paul's predilection for the use of the plural "we" for "I" has led some people to think that this was a testimony on Paul's part that he had known Christ while Christ was alive, yet before His crucifixion. Now, this is one of the things that we will have to leave unsettled until the day when we know a little more than we know now. But it is not important, because what is considered here hasn't anything to do with personal acquaintance or even friendship. For Paul saying we once knew Christ after the flesh means we once regarded Him from a human point of view. Whether he had ever met Him or not, I do not know. I would be inclined to doubt that. But whether he had or not, what Paul said here is, though we once regarded Jesus as a man and tried to appraise Him as a man and think about Him as a man, now we do so no more.

This appraising our Lord or this attempt to do it has provided rather vain employment for natural men who are with a religious bent all down the centuries. They try to capture the essence of the Master or they try to explain His person or appraise His genius or by some technique of analysis, they try to understand Him. What was He, a Jew? They say, well, no. Yes and no. He was born of the seed of Abraham and of the line of David, and his mother was a Jewess whose lineage could be traced. So that makes Jesus a Jew according to the flesh. That much we know. But the religion of Jesus, the religion of Judaism as it was practiced in Jesus' time, was as far apart as the poles. So, it is not proper to say that Jesus was a Jew, meaning that Jesus was part and parcel of the Judaism of the time of Jesus. He was not. But He was a Jew in that He was a Jew in the flesh of Abraham.

There are those who say Christ was not a Jew. And of course, that's a great mistake. It's a modern heresy and an error, but yet, He was not a Jew. There was nothing about Jesus like the Pharisees or the Herodians, Sadducees, the Essenes, or any of those who were the Jews of Christ's day. Neither did He have about Him anything of the Greek philosophies. They've wondered what was, did He learn from the Greek? The answer is no. Our Lord God, Jesus, being God, knew of course

everything the Greeks knew and infinitely more. But His doctrines partake not of the Greek's doctrine. There's no trace nor flavor of Greek philosophy in the teachings of our Lord. Neither was he an oriental. They sometimes try to classify the Jews as Orientals and the Bible is an oriental book. But anybody who has read even in the most cursory manner in the religions of the Orient know, that there is a flavor in the gospels completely absent. And there is something in the Oriental religions wholly different from the teachings of our Savior. There is no likeness at all.

So, this Jesus has been the despair of Adam's race. A few have worshipped Him and had their hearts satisfied. But the others have tried to explain Him and have run upon the rocks. They can't do it and so they go into despair. The man Paul said, henceforth know we Him no more. Henceforth, we consider Him not according to the flesh. We regard Him not from a mere human point of view. You see, Paul had met the triumphant Christ on the road. The result had been conversion, illumination and transformation. The man Paul was completely changed. And he fully accepted Christ as God and Redeemer. And this complete change of viewpoint resulted concerning Christ.

So, Paul said, that I see Him no more as a mere man. I see Him as the redeeming God, the Head of a new race, whose death has doomed the old life. For said Paul, if He died for all and are all dead. His resurrection had established the new life. The inadequacy of a merely earthly Christ, we can't over emphasize it or overstate it. This is the time when Christ is very chummy for everybody. But the Christ of homey companionability is not the Christ of the New Testament. He's not the Christ of the throne or the Christ of the glory. The Christ of the feminine charm who is sweet but helpless and bewildered among real men. Christ who is the idealist who died for His ideal but failed, and whose religion can never be lived. Christ the martyr who gave all and died in a noble and praiseworthy attempt to change man. And Christ the wonderful one by comparison and by some pulpit orators spend half their time drawing comparisons between Christ and somebody else, Christ and Shakespeare, Christ and Plato, Christ and Caesar.

I believe that all this fawning upon the human Christ is little short of an insult to His Majesty, because you see, we cannot compare the incomparable. We dare not attempt it. Comparing that which cannot be compared, that's what we're trying to do. Jesus Christ stands alone. We compare Him with nobody for His is the incomparable Christ.

Now, the man of God said, though we once knew Him after their flesh, we know not only Christ no more after the flesh, but we know no man after the flesh. Now, what did he mean there? He didn't mean he had no human acquaintances. He meant in the kingdom of God, mere human standards are no longer valid. Human standards are valid on Earth, but they're not valid in the kingdom of God. The standards of race, they are not valid standards. We cannot separate races into colors and say this is superior, this is a little further down the scale, this is higher. We cannot do that. We dare not do that because there is no superior race.

We're all made of one blood. There's no superior color. In the kingdom of God, there's no such thing as race or color. There is neither Jew or Gentile or Scythian or bondman nor freeman. We are all one in Christ Jesus and new people that has been raised above race and color, physical beauty, size and strength and cultural levels and wealth and education and position. Not one of these counts in the kingdom of God, not one. Even in James day, the church had forgotten that. At least parts of the church had forgotten it. And they were busy praising some men who wore big rings and had much gold and looking down upon those who are poor. And James wrote a very scathing chapter in which he told him to cut that out. That God's people were judged by their faith. They were rich according to faith. And that men should in the church of Christ not be judged according to their bank account, their education, their social level or color. They should be judged according to the faith they had.

And so we must judge, and the church of Christ must judge. And as men differ from men and men do differ from each other in the church, we're not all alike. The church of Christ does not consist of one dead level of conformity. In the church of Christ, we differ from each other. The star differs from another star in glory yonder. And in the great day when Christ shall come back to judge the world, we'll find that we're not all alike. Some are 60-fold, some 30-fold, some 100-fold, never a man shall be rewarded according as he hath done. So, the church should remember that.

But the difference in the church of Christ is not a difference by the old standards, by the old judgments of mortal flesh. According to the flesh are the key words there, key phrase. The church should put a different estimate upon men. We should judge men according to their faith and the man of God said the church should do that. We should judge them according to their love. We should appraise them according to the purity of their lives. We should judge them according to their generosity, according to their unselfishness, according to their unselfish Christ's likeness. And we should not judge them according to the flesh.

Nothing else comes in the kingdom of God Paul says so, nothing else comes. The church I suppose, is still having a hard time to remember that her Savior was a peasant. Still having a hard time to remember that her Savior never had a degree from any college. It is still very difficult for us to keep in mind that our Savior was born in a manger among cattle. That the first voice you heard after the crooning voice of His mother was the sound of the lowing of oxen or the braying of donkeys.

It's very hard for us to remember that he was born, not born in the beautiful, softly colored manger and stable of the Christmas cards. He was born in a dirty, smelly, stable, in the manger part no doubt on the straw. But He was born there nevertheless in that dirty place. The world doesn't like to believe it and the church doesn't like to believe it, but it is so. If He had been born up on a high level, it would have instantaneously condemned everybody beneath him. But He was

born so low down, and anybody can come down. If we had to have a million dollars to be saved, it would rule out practically everybody except a handful. But if you don't have to have a cent, anybody can come. Because that's a simple matter. Anybody can have nothing, but not everybody can have a million dollars.

So, if we had to have an IQ of 180 and been able to appreciate all the great philosophy and art of the world; if Christ had been born on that kind of level, it would have discouraged every common man in all the wide world who read the story of the gospel. But the Man was born in a manger among the lowing cattle. He had nothing. And he grew up helping His father in a carpenter shop, his supposed father. So, that settles it for everybody. That's why you can preach Christianity in a coal mine or among the naked savages of New Guinea. We know no more any man after the flesh. Our judgments are not earthly judgments. They're heavenly judgments and spiritual judgments.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, he continues. Old things have passed away and all things have become new. Redemption, you see, is not an improvement of the old order. Christ never attempts to improve Adam's flesh. If we could only remember that. This closely ties in with what I said last Sunday morning, that the old vessel was always with us. And if you could improve yourself and you were consciously improved, it would be a source of pride to you and like the seraphim and cherub rather that covers, perhaps you would fall in sin, because you would regard yourself, you'd become self-regarding.

In psychology they call that narcissism. The looking in and on upon and admiring yourself, from the old legend that a god by the name of Narcissus looked at his image in the glass or in the water, flowing water or still water, and admired himself so he turned into a flower. That's where we got the narcissus. Those old Greeks having gods and reasons for everything. But narcissism, looking in on yourself, that marrying yourself, that's what would happen to you and me if God improved the own flesh, but he doesn't. He just lets the old flesh lie around but inside the flesh, he puts a jewel.

You know, they used to have a saying back in the days, oh, even in the days of Shakespeare, that in the head of every toad there was a diamond. A jewel in the head of the toad. I don't know why some sharp-eyed fellow didn't run that down and gather a few toads and disprove it, but they believed it. They believed the toad carried a jewel in his forehead. Now, that isn't true unless you first put the jewel there. But I do know it's true that in every Christian there is a jewel and redemption doesn't improve the old order, it creates a new order. And it incorporates the personality, the individuality, the soul, the spirit, of the old order into the new and thus completely displaces it. It's supersedence of the old by the new. And all things become new; a new origin, we are born of the Spirit; a new Father, God is now our Father; a new heart, I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh; new thoughts, new values, new desires, new ambitions, new pleasures.

Every Christian ought to about every, say every six months, take a few hours off, go alone and say don't bother me now unless it's a matter of life and death. Get down before God with his open Bible and appraise himself and see whether he is indeed a new man, whether his old values are changing, whether his old desires are going and new ones are forming, whether old ambitions are passing away, whether their old pleasures are passing. You ought to do that. We ought to do that.

And if we find that we've slowed down, and looking ourselves over we find there's no improvement in our spiritual lives over a year ago or six months ago, we ought to do something about it. Not the improvement, understand, of you, but the improvement of your spiritual life, of your desires, ambitions, love, faith. Forgiveness, patience, meekness, modesty, generosity, all these should improve. They're the growth of the new creature in you.

So these are the new people. And God is getting ready for a new day. Behold He says in Revelation, God maketh all things new. And so, God is getting a new people ready for a new day, to inhabit a new kingdom, to inhabit new heavens and new earth. And we shall be in the new heaven and new earth and shall sing a new song before the throne, a new song, Worthy is the Lamb. A song that never has been composed yet. Palestrina, Handel, nobody has composed that song yet. We get a little trace of what it is going to be like and we know the theme. The theme is going to be the Worthy Lamb beside the throne. That's the theme, but the song hasn't been composed. And they sang a new song. A song that not even David with all his genius ever composed.

So, there's new people on the earth. We ought to remember that more and more now as we see the day approaching and more and more, cause we're all mixed up. Religion is now all mixed up. What I saw coming is now pretty much on us, that liberalism and tolerance and the broad religious latitude and Aryan spirit that takes in everything is pretty much on this now. And we're going to have to grit our teeth and set our jaw and trust God and stand, and stand for New Testament Christianity in the midst of the whirling billows of mixed-up religion.

I heard a interview on the air the other day. A man was being interviewed. He is going to call together a conference of world religions, and they're going to come from everywhere. Buddhists are going to send representatives, Muhamadins, Shintoists, Persians, Catholic, Jew, Protestant, and all the other minor religions of the world are going to send representatives. The National Council of Churches is having representatives there, I think, and the Jews and all. He's calling them together. And they're going to try to work something out where we can get together instead of being apart; we can be united instead of separated.

Well, I could have told them that long ago, if they would just let me read a chapter from the Book of Revelation to them. I knew that was coming. But now, hear it boldly declared, learned man, geniuses, religious geniuses, going to bring us all together. There to stand and say, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, and I don't believe in the god of the heathen. I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son

of God, and I don't believe in any of your synthetic saviors. I do not believe in Adam's flesh. I believe in a new creation. You're going to be just about as popular at that convention as a communist would be at a tea party of the Daughters of the American Revolution. They won't be in the world be welcome, but I don't suppose any of them will be there. I know one that won't be.

No, my brethren, we are, the religions getting together now. We're stroking each other's back. And here's the man of God with his sword and he cut sharp down through the middle and says, on this side, after the flesh, on this side, the new creation created in Christ Jesus. They are as far apart as the gulf that separated the rich man and Lazarus. So, we want to be loving and charitable, and we don't want to join the crowd of those who condemn.

Years ago, a brother wrote a tract, "Come to Jesus." It was a beautiful, tender appeal to sinners to come to Jesus. Then, he got into a religious controversy, and he wrote a hot blistering attack on somebody. He had it all finished except the title. And, a friend of his, he showed the manuscript to a friend. He said, here's the manuscript of my new attack on so and so. And he said, I have got everything finished but the title. I can't think of a title. Could you help me? His friend read it. Yes, he said, I think I could tell you a good title, something that would cover the subject pretty well. He said, well, alright, what is it? He says, call it, "Go to Hell by the author of Come to Jesus." Well, that's been told, and I rather understand that. I never want to adopt a go to hell attitude. Who am I to send men off. Only the Lord God can send men there. But I do know my testimony. I know what I'm supposed to say. I know what I'm supposed to stand for, what I'm supposed to believe. And so, we take our stand, and we take it solidly. They'll come our way, still we stand. They turn their backs on us, still we stand. They'll praise us when they're in the right mood, we stand. Then they'll turn their backs and condemn, still we stand.

So, there's a new people. And my friends, nothing else matters, but that you belong to that company of people. Nothing else matters. That you are a fundamentalists doesn't mean a snap of your fingers. That you're an evangelical, doesn't mean that. That you belong to the Christian Missionary Alliance, doesn't mean that, whether you're a new creature or not. Whether you've been born of the Spirit and washed in the blood, or that you've entered that Kingdom, it's everlasting whether God is indeed your Father, Jesus Christ, indeed your Savior. Whether the Holy Ghost does indeed abide in you, that's all that matters. Nothing else matters.

There's a new people and they don't judge each other according to Adam standards. They've left Adam in his ways. And while the old tabernacle is still Adamic and they have still to dwell in it, it still has all the weaknesses of Adam's lost fallen flesh. A new man in Christ Jesus had nothing to do with it. He stands aloof and dwells apart as a star in the firmament, new in Christ.

This is a new Savior, new kingdom, new people, new heaven, new earth, new race, new world. It's all before us and our dear God only knows how near it is to us. We will not set dates. We'll only say

it can't be too far off seeing the situation the world is in. And may God grant that it may come up soon and reveal itself soon and the two shall be sleeping in one bed, one shall be taken and the other left. Two shall be working in the field, one shall be taken and the other left.

In all of these passages about which, over which controversy now rages, shall fulfill themselves and prove themselves by fulfillment. Always remember, fulfillment is the last final interpretation. Men can interpret Scriptures differently on the Second Coming and prophetic themes, but fulfillment will be the last final answer. When our Lord returns and the dead rise and the living are changed, the book will become then wide open for everybody. It won't be a question then of arguments. It will be a question of wide-eyed wonder in the presence of fulfilled promises. And that I'm looking for and hoping for.

I don't know where else to turn, do you? Is there any place else to look? Do you know of anywhere else to go? Does modern education got it? Does modern politics got anything for you? Do you think they have? Does modern science got anything? I don't know a place in all the wide world to look. Sociology, do they got anything, sociologists that got us in the mess we're in now between races. Politicians have got us in the mess we're in now between nations. And the liberals and the synthetic religions, they've got us in the mess we're in now between religions. Only one direction my brother—UP! There is only one place to look and that's up. Amen.