

No Greater Conceit

Neil Girrard

There is perhaps no greater or more dangerous, conceit than the notion that Christ died for *me*. This is not to say there is no truth whatsoever in this idea but rather it is only a partial truth, a truth that can actually cause us to become an enemy of the cross of Christ *if* we embrace only the partial truth and exclude the remainder of the whole counsel of God. Indeed, the very superficiality with which we so often approach the deep things of God may prove to be the instrument of our spiritual demise.

Jesus did not die on the cross for *me*, but rather:

- “Christ Himself is the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” (1 Jn. 2:2)
- “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink of one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.” (1 Cor. 12:12-14)
- “Christ loved the ekklesia and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious ekklesia, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thin, but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5:25-27)

Certainly the individual I call *me* is invited, called, loved and welcome to receive and participate in all that Christ has done. But for *me* to suppose that Christ died to make *me* happy or to make *me* a better person is, at best, a lopsided portion of the truth. Christ died that *I* might no longer live but rather Christ in *me*. (Gal. 2:20) Not the old *me* but rather a new *me* “created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:24), a *me* whose mind must be constantly renewed so that I may know, pursue and attain to the will of God for my life. (Rom. 12:2) Indeed, there truly is nothing erroneous in the statement, “Christ died for *me* to change *me*” provided one does not stop there and live the rest of one’s days on this small piece of partial truth.

The question of individuality and corporate unity is one which has plagued the people of Christ since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. On what basis, then, does the individual called *me* interact with the other parts of the ekklesia, the body of Christ. (Eph. 1:22-23) The answer to that question is found in what Paul said above: “...we have all been made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:13)

This simple answer – which, believe it or not, does embody the whole counsel of God on the matter – has not always been observed or practiced as it was in the days when many, seeing Ananias and Sapphira’s fate, dared not join themselves to the apostles’ fellowship. (see Acts 5:11-13) The Catholic sect (though it was a majority and had dominant power, it was still a sect, in reality, the first denominational sect) of the second century rallied its Nicolaitan bishops and overcame the hyper-charismatic Montanus and his followers. The Catholic sect of the fifth century, nestled securely under the power of the Nicolaitan pope, relied on its supposedly

“unbroken succession” of bishops from the apostles and even Christ and decreed that their sect (the majority, orthodox, “universal,” Catholic sect) alone could be “the true church” (“church” being the English word inappropriately used to translate the Greek word “ekklesia”) and excommunicated the schismatic Donatists. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century restored many deep truths to the awareness of millions of people yet failed to probe to the depths of the divisions among the people who name the name of Christ because all of one’s life, especially the corporate life, was not required to be subject either to the Head or His Spirit, but rather was to be subject to men.

Certainly, the Headship of Christ was proclaimed and preached – even as bishops practiced their ignorance, intrigues and partisan agendas to sway the decisions of councils and superiors. Deceived men (who saw nothing wrong with their Nicolaitan positions and ways) met to decide what was truth! Yet after such councils, all loudly proclaimed that they had been guided by the Spirit of truth and that God had spoken through their decisions, decisions that were to abide upon the people of Christ forever. The Nicene creed, for example, was produced at such a council and so proclaimed. But just over a millennium later, Alexander Campbell, also led by the Spirit of truth, would proclaim, “No creed but Christ.”

The Headship of Christ is practiced when every individual follows Christ into the corporate unity of His body. When Christ is truly followed, there will be unity of the Spirit followed by the unity of the faith. (see Eph. 4:3, 13) When men are followed there will be division and carnality of all kinds. The “church,” with its reliance on manmade institutions, traditions and procedures, can only be a counterfeit of the bride and body of Christ, the visible expression of that great prostitute drunk on the blood of the saints. (Rev. 17:6) The ekklesia, no matter how few, when truly led by its rightful Head, Christ Jesus, always becomes a powerful and effective tool and agent for change in this world. Unfortunately, men have insisted on retaining their own “veto rights” and controls over the “reins” on any work of God that begins to happen within their tiny fiefdoms.

The “church” decided long ago what it meant to follow Christ and God. Most men acquiesced to that decision – those who could not acquiesce often paid the price with their lives, murdered at the hands of the “church”! Yet today the truth is being sounded that we, as individuals, need not – indeed *must* not – take our definition of who and what we are supposed to be in Christ from some man and certainly not from an institution built upon the bodies, bones and blood of those who truly walked with Christ and God in their day! Our individual identity must be formed by God – the new *me* (2 Cor. 5:17) – and our corporate identity must also be forged by God. (1 Cor. 12:24-25)

The remnant who stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb are said to be “the ones who were not defiled with women.” (Rev. 14:1, 4) The only women (plural) mentioned in the Revelation are the prostitute daughters of Mystery Babylon (Rev. 17:5) Those people who have come out of the “church” are almost always subjected to excruciatingly long periods of “wilderness” training to remove all vestiges of “church” contamination. Those who grow weary of this “wilderness” most often return to a “church” or start their own version of “church,” usually in their own living room.

God, however, still sees the abomination for what it is – coming together purportedly in His name but assembling on some basis other than the Headship of Christ as orchestrated by His Spirit. It is not our place to judge those others who gather according to their own light and preferences but it is our place to hear and follow the Spirit wherever and however He leads us, a leading that will be progressively characterized and permeated with good fruit that advances the

kingdom of Christ and God even as it might tear into or even tear down the kingdoms and fiefdoms of men. The one who bears no fruit for the kingdom of God – especially those whose life only builds up some kingdom or fiefdom of some man – does well to reassess the foundations of his life!

There is perhaps no greater conceit beyond “Christ died for *me*” than the conceit that says “*my way*” is acceptable to God. Those who attend “*my church*” are correct – it is their “church” and it is not Christ’s body or ekklesia. We enter the holiest place, the presence of God, by the blood and body of Jesus Christ. He *is* the new and living way by which we may move to the other side of the veil that separates holy God from sinful men. (Heb. 10:19-20) He *is* the door through which those who enter are saved – but those who enter the sheepfold by some other way are thieves and robbers. (Jn. 10:1, 9) There is a wide path that leads to destruction and many go that way - but there is a narrow gate and a narrow path that leads to life and few find it. (Mt. 7:13-14)

“Christ gave Himself for *us* that He might redeem *us* from every lawless [self-approved] deed and purify for Himself His own special *people*, zealous for good [godly, God-ordained] works.” (Tit. 2:14) The individual follower of Christ does not need to overly concern himself with the grand questions of “theology” – if he will but work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, all questions that he truly needs answered, however great or small, will be answered in Him who is our life. (see Phlp. 2:12, Col. 3:4) Simple humility will triumph over great conceits every time.

Let he who has ears hear.

Neil Girrard
Paidion Books
P.O. Box 327
Capitan, NM 88316

Website – www.paidionbooks.org

Email – paidion@paidionbooks.org

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