

MISAIMINGS

“Who concerning the Truth Have Misaimed — 2 Timothy 2:18

Misaiming concerning Philippians 3:13-14

Misaiming: “3:13...One thing *I do*. Paul had reduced the whole of sanctification to the simple and clear goal of doing ‘one thing’—pursuing Christlikeness.... 3:14 the goal. Christlikeness here and now (*see note on v. 12*) the prize. Christlikeness in heaven” (*The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1997, p. 1826).

Truth: The apostle Paul’s goal, as stated in Philippians 3, was indeed simple and clear, although it differs radically from the interpretation above. Paul made no mention of “Christlikeness.” Instead, he reduced his Christian pursuit to two central items: “That I may *gain Christ* and *be found in Him*” (vv. 8-9, emphasis added). His goal was not to become *like* Christ; rather, he was desperately pursuing the very person of Christ. It is for the goal of gaining, appropriating, and apprehending Christ Himself that Paul counted everything else “loss” and “refuse” (vv. 7-8). As Paul abandoned each of his former goals “on account of Christ” (v. 7), he gained and experienced the dear person of Christ (v. 8) and increasingly longed to be found not just *like* Christ but actually “*in Him*” (v. 9, emphasis added).

There is a fundamental difference between “Christlikeness” and Christ Himself. The former is often portrayed as being the result of self-improvement, a product of man’s effort to conform to self-imposed codes of behavior, while the latter can only be Christ Himself, who lives and operates within the regenerated human spirit of every believer. To be *like* Christ would be a marvelous accomplishment, yet it would still be something independent of Christ. To gain Christ Himself, to experience His very person, and to be found in Him are far more profound and glorious. To “gain Christ” and to “be found in Him” speak of the organic oneness and incorporation of God and man, in which there is a mutual, divine-human indwelling and identification. In this union Christ is gained by the believer, and the believer is gained by Christ (v. 12), the two entities thus becoming a mutual abode (John 14:20). The believer’s goal, as exemplified by the pattern of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3, should therefore be focused on experientially knowing and subjectively appropriating the precious person of Christ. This is the goal for which Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:17: “That Christ

may make His home in your hearts.” Christians are called to much more than “Christlikeness”; we are called to be *one* with Christ and to gain Christ Himself by allowing Him to establish and expand His home in our inward being.

Misaiming concerning the Clergy/Laity System

Misaiming: “The first reformation put the Scriptures into the hands of the laity. The second reformation, taking place now, is putting the ministry into the hands of the laity....The theology of impartation will be rightly developed when the ascension gift ministries do what they are called to do: Equip! Equip! Equip!” (Frank Damazio, “Just What *Is* a “Layman?,” *Focus*, Fall 1998, p. 8).

Truth: This passage rightly asserts that the believers (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers) given by the Lord as gifts to the members of His Body are given for their perfecting; that is, to equip them to do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). Nevertheless, underlying this assertion is the subtle, yet serious, error of attributing any notion of clergy (here designated as “ascension gift ministries”) to the Body of Christ. In the Body of Christ, though, there can be no distinction between a “clergy” class and a “laity” class; instead, all believers are priests to God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6) and members one of another. Without question, there is leadership and spiritual authority in the Body of Christ, but these particular functions accrue by virtue of the individual believer’s inward maturity in Christ (see Gal. 1:1). They in no way indicate a distinction conferred by human ordination or theological training. Even the apostles, in carrying out their apostolic function, considered themselves to be brothers, fellow members equal with all the rest (Rev. 1:9). In fact, Paul viewed himself as “less than the least of all saints” (Eph. 3:8). Though there is necessarily variety in function and gift among the members of Christ, these particularly gifted ones are nonetheless simply members of the one Body of Christ in mutuality with all believers, sharing equal status, esteem, and affection (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 14-15). In Christ’s organic Body, there should be no hint of hierarchy or thought of professional Christian workers (“clergy”) trying to equip the “laity.”

Misaiming concerning the New Man in Ephesians 4:22-24

Misaiming: “The ‘new self’ is the regenerate self as distinguished from the old self (Rom. 6:6, note), and is a new self as having become a partaker of the divine nature and life” (*The New Scofield Study Bible*, NASB, 1988, p. 1669).

“Another possibility, perhaps involving fewer complications than others, is that the old self is simply the person I once was, the character I once bore, the personality that was being destroyed by sin. The new self is the new character I *put on*, the totality of Christian personal traits that is *created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness* (v. 24)” (Walter L. Liefeld, *Ephesians, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, 1997, p. 115).

Truth: Interestingly, the Greek word *anthropos*, mistranslated in the NASB’s rendering of Ephesians 4:22 and 24 as “*self*,” is correctly rendered “*man*” by the same translators in both Ephesians 2:15 and Colossians 3:10. It denotes not an individual new “*self*” but the corporate new man created through the Lord’s work on the cross, which abolished the middle wall of partition, the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, created by the law of the commandments in ordinances, and simultaneously produced the Body of Christ.

Scripture does confirm that there is an “*inner man*” that is distinct from this corporate “*new man*” within every believer (Eph. 3:16). This inner man is the believer’s human spirit which has been regenerated with God’s divine life and nature (2 Pet. 1:4). In contrast, the “*new man*” (not “*inner man*”) in Ephesians 4:22 and 24 is clearly the corporate Body of Christ, as evidenced by the context of these verses as well as by the subject of the book of Ephesians—the church. For example, in verse 22, Paul charges us to “put off...the old man,” and he identifies this old man as the aggregate of the Gentiles who “walk in the vanity of their mind” (v. 17). The old man thus cannot logically refer to the individual believer’s former manner of life, but rather to the corporate, fallen Adamic race.

In addition, subsequent to his admonition that we “put on the new man,” Paul addresses our relationships with one another in the Body of Christ in matters such as forgiving one another and speaking truth to one another (vv. 25-32). An even more compelling argument is the fact that the entire book of Ephesians is emphatically corporate, stressing the church as the *ekklesia*—the called-out ones, the Body and bride of Christ, the household and kingdom of God, and the corporate warrior. In its highest aspect, the church is also the

“new man,” which the believers are called to put on as we put off the corporate “old man,” Adam.

Misaiming concerning Worship in Spirit and Truth (John 4:24)

Misaiming: “Jesus is teaching that the place where we worship makes no difference, but our attitude of spirit and sincerity of heart are the important things. Whether we worship one place or another makes no difference with the Lord, as long as we are truthful and sincere” (M. R. DeHaan, *508 Answers to Bible Questions*, 1952, pp. 124-125).

Truth: Central to the New Testament worship of God is the fact that man is a tripartite being, consisting of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12; 1 Cor. 2:14-15). What the Lord Jesus teaches us in John 4:24 about the place where we worship is quite significant. He both explains and exhorts: “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.” Real worship takes place in the regenerated human spirit, the deepest part of man. To “worship in spirit” is a fundamental necessity, because Spirit is God’s own nature. For believers to be in spirit is more than adopting an improved “attitude”; the regenerated human spirit is the unique point of contact with God. It is where we meet God, and it replaces the Old Testament temple and tabernacle. It is in our human spirit that we believers were born again, having our initial experience of God (3:6). It is also in our human spirit that we pray and are built together with other believers as God’s dwelling place (Eph. 6:18; 2:22).

Worship in “truthfulness” far surpasses even the most earnest and devout “sincerity of heart.” Truth is Christ Himself (John 14:6), and to worship in truthfulness is to worship through the person of Christ. Just as “in spirit” supersedes the temple as the site of worship, “in truthfulness” likewise replaces the Old Testament offerings as the means of worship. In the old covenant, worship was restricted to the physical temple with its offerings; in the new covenant, real worship is “in spirit” with Christ as the reality, the substance, of what we offer to the Father. He is the real trespass offering, the real sin offering, the real meal offering, and the real burnt offering. Only the person and work of Christ satisfies God and make us acceptable to Him and Him enterable for us. This worship in spirit, which the Father is seeking (4:23), is inward, real, substantial, and sweet, in contrast to a merely soulish “attitude of spirit and sincerity of heart.”

by the Editors