

# CHIEF MINISTRIES

March 2017

Listen to what Paul says: *“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body, or out of the body I do not know – God knows” (1 Corinthians 12:2-3)*. Earlier in chapter 5, verse 8 he says, *“We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”* In his later years, Paul wrote from prison: *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am going to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two; I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.” (Philippians 1:21-24)*

It is certainly true that God’s original and ultimate intention for man is that he exist bodily. Our bodies both our present and unredeemed ones and our future glorified ones are not to be thought of as sinful in themselves or of minimal importance. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)* But time after time God takes pains to remind us that we are most essentially spirit beings.

How could he have expressed it more pointedly than through the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:14? In this passage concerning praying in tongues, Paul says, *“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”*

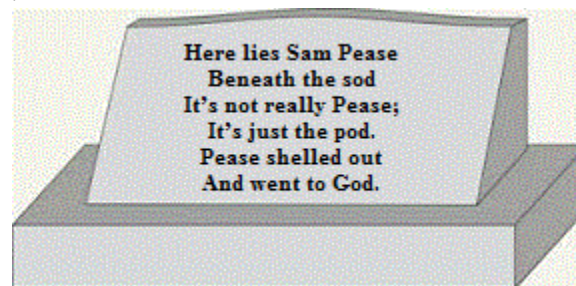
In other words, there was actual, meaningful, productive communication with God who is spirit. A person was in some way edified (14:4), even though he had no intellectual awareness of the specific nature of the communication (unless he also was able to interpret his prayer). His worship and thanksgiving to God were not dependent upon the working or reservoir of information of his physical brain. It was his spirit that prayed. (Note: I’m not focusing on the tongues issue. Rather, the validity of the communication on the level of the Spirit.) This same idea would also seem to be in Romans 8:16, *“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit ....”*

Imagine the thousands of truly born-again people whose identities have been blurred by some fulfillment that was simply flesh. As you think of them, you find it difficult to separate them from that particular obsession that gives them an identity. Perhaps it was some sport. Or some consuming commitment to build a business empire. There was always some “deal”, some product, some activity, something around which all else seem to revolve. Was this their true, unique identity? Of course not. Perhaps you wouldn’t even have recognized them if they had discovered in an equally consuming way what their identity and thus their life really was.

In our largely justified reaction against the mysticism of Eastern religions, we Christians find ourselves spooked by the idea that man is essentially a spiritual being. In our false assumption that Christians are simply forgiven sinners who have the Holy Spirit to control their badness and produce Christ's goodness, we have denied spiritual personhood. We have traded it for "in the flesh" identities which draw their meaning from the world's measurement of a man. This is no minor thing. It is a tragedy.

Yet, to suggest anything away from that point of view is to elicit shouts of "Gnosticism!", "False mysticism!", "Perfectionism!"

Two very different illustrations come to mind which may help clarify what I'm trying to get you to see. A peanut and a diamond. In its simplest form the first illustration is expressed in the epitaph on a grave marker:



Let's consider this more carefully. Let's imagine a human being, inward man and outward man, like a peanut with its shell. Normally, the shape of the shell gives us some idea of the shape of the peanut inside - big or small, fat or skinny - but not always. Sometimes, for any number of reasons, the shell must be covered with warts, bumps, or creases. And yet when we remove the shell, we may find that the irregularities have no connection at all with the nature of the peanut inside.

You look at me, you live with me. Do you know me? I hope so. I sincerely hope the outward "flesh" man that you see bears a close resemblance to the shape of the deep person I most truly am. It would be so good if my spirit and my behavior were saying the same thing. No, I am not two people, but there are most certainly levels to my personhood. There is a deep self (inner man) and my more shallow self. The inner man is the true self, which answers to the Divine pattern; which is contrasted with the 'outer man' (2 Corinthians 4:16), the material frame, through which for a time the 'self' finds expression in terms of earth. Shallow self is so quickly affected by circumstances. And if shallow self is not made a "slave to righteousness" (Romans 6:19), there is no telling what strange warts and bumps and creases you may see. My mannerisms, voice pattern, even my temperament may be circumstantial rather than reflective of my true personhood. You may observe me when I'm so busy protecting some supposed "self-image", or catching one I think I'm supposed to have, or grieving over one I think I've lost, that you won't have the faintest idea of who I really am. And neither would I. But, I have a dream. I hope it's more than a dream.

I dream that you might see when you look at me.... live with me.... a unique, human, personable expression of Jesus. Like no one else.

Which brings me to the second illustration. First the peanut and then...the diamond, or in a more diminutive state - a glass prism. Remember those from 6<sup>th</sup> grade science class? Without light it's just a hunk of glass - not much at all. But with light, OH! It reflects all colors.

This, to me, is the most expressive illustration of a Christian that I know. In terms of his deep spiritual personhood, he or she is a uniquely designed prism. A prism formed by the Creator to receive His very life (invisible to the world) and translate that light into the visible colors of the character of God.

To most fully appreciate my prism, I must hold it in direct line with the sun. I must also choose a good surface to display the resulting colors of the spectrum.

This is what I most truly am - a God created being with no capacity whatsoever within myself to produce real life. I am built rather to receive life. And as God shines into me, life is received

*“For God who said, let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (2 Corinthians 4:6,7)* This life is best displayed upon some surface. That surface is my flesh in all its varied relationships with others.

That is why Paul said, *“to remain in the flesh is more needful for you,”* because it was in that state he could productively manifest the Lord Jesus. *“For me to live, [in the flesh] is Christ.” (Philippians 1:21)* It is in these hands, this voice, this mind, these emotions, which are to be the display surfaces for the vivid colors of His attributes. His love, His power, His beauty, His patience. It is indeed the “fruit of the Spirit!”

There may be times in medical isolation, or solitary prison confinement/ad-seg, when “the light of the glory of God” is only observed by angels, principalities, powers and God himself. Yet even this may be far more precious in God's evaluations than we could possibly know.

There may be times when some type of illness or inherited defect or changes brought on by old age may greatly limit what anyone sees of Jesus. Is life then without meaning? Let's consider this for a moment.

My prism has 3 faceted surfaces. Though the color spectrum displayed by it is perfect, the extent of that display is limited by the number of surfaces. If instead of a single prism you could now imagine a flawless diamond with dozens or hundreds of facets, then you might get a better idea of God's purposes in making you His child. Life here on earth is not solely for the purpose of displaying the Savior, it is also the time during which God adds new facets to His original, flawless diamond - you.

God's intention for you and me is not only to manifest His glory in time, but also for eternity.

*“There are heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor,*

*the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable, it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory...*

*“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” (1 Corinthians 15:40-42, Daniel 12:3)*

There may be times, extended times, when God as a master diamond cutter is adding new facets to our spiritual beings which will be seen only in eternity. Oh dear Christian, perhaps now you are being rather painfully faceted. Remember Peter says, *“These trials have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold; which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:7)*

*“Endure hardship as discipline,”* says the book of Hebrews. *“God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His Holiness (Hebrews 12:7, 10, 18-28).* The next time you find yourself thinking, “I’m just not good for anything... I’m a burden to everyone around me,” stop it. First of all, it is probably not true. And second, do you really doubt the wisdom and eternal purposes of God?

He has called you to eternal glory.

With such an important destiny, do you actually believe that God would mishandle so precious a treasure as you are to Him? You....and everyone else but God may be surprised beyond words someday. Surprised at the multi-facets of your eternal being as they multiply the beauty of God throughout the ramparts of heaven.

Perhaps the same illustration may help us to understand in what way a young child may appear in heaven in contrast with some old saint who has walked with God for a lifetime. Each will be distinctive persons....flawless diamonds. One, however, will be mini-faceted, the other multi-faceted. Through each one God will be perfectly glorified, but as Paul says, even as *“star differs from star in splendor.”*

All of us should wish that forever the glory of our God would be magnified and multiplied through our presence in heaven in the greatest way possible. To this end, the disciplines of the Christian life are not only for our sake and for the sake of our effectiveness as ambassadors on earth, but they are also for God’s sake - both for time and eternity.

The sanctifying miracle of the new birth guarantees the quality of the diamond. But you and I have a most responsible role to play in determining the quality of facets as we willingly submit to the Master Diamond Cutter (Hebrews 12:9-15)

Spiritual personhood! Don’t be spooked by it. Glory in it. Don’t allow anyone or anything to so degrade your concept of personhood as to measure it with a flesh - level yardstick.

Remember, too, that a diamond isn’t much of anything without the light. The great tragedy of Eden was man’s choice of independence and its consequent meaninglessness. The great miracle

of the new birth is in the establishment of true personhood, inseparable from dependence on God. Full of meaning....forever.

Is this as radical as it sounds? Jesus said, *“they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.”* His expectation was that your life would be as revolutionary as His was. He ate and slept, breathed and walked as anyone else, yet He could say *“anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”*

And before you file that verse away as simply one more proof of His deity remember that he also said, *“that all of them may be one; Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in us.... I in them, and You in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me.”* (John 17:21, 23)

*“For me to live is Christ.”*

Now that’s radical.

In describing the nature of man, God places a strong priority on spiritual personhood, although in doing so He allows no room for devaluing all that is mortal about man.

Therefore, a man is no less a person through the loss of any or all his physical, mental or emotional faculties even though the expression of his personhood may be severely warped or restricted. The necessary mortal frame of reference in which we all find ourselves requires that we make evaluations of ourselves and others as we perceive one another on this level. But even as we do this (aptitude tests, personality profiles, position, relationships, etc.) we must keep in mind that underneath the “appearance” is “the heart” - that truest, deepest self (2 Corinthians 5:12 also 5:16-17) and also keep in mind Proverbs 23:7 – *“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”*

Since by the new birth a person becomes alive spiritually (he lives by the Spirit’s gifts of Jesus’ risen life) he has a right - in fact, a duty - to evaluate himself in a most positive way. As a “prism” his worth is the highest order - to receive the light of the glory of God and translate that invisible light into the visible attractiveness of Christ. Christians should take great pleasure in realizing that their significance will find its highest expression in eternity. But until then... Let your light shine my brothers and sisters. Wherever God has you, make a difference. Be the difference. For only what’s done for Christ will last.

Peace and blessings to you all,

**Chief**

*If you want to know more about CHIEF Ministries or would like to be a part of this, please go to [www.chiefministries.com](http://www.chiefministries.com) and [www.chiefshouse.org](http://www.chiefshouse.org)*

*Christ’s*

*Heart*

*In*

*Every*

*Felon*



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