

*O LORD. We join together in asking that truth would be free  
to make her sorties upon us all, which way You please.  
Guide our minds for your designs. We ask that,  
nothing smothers truth's golden beams. (Spurgeon)*

Our first ancestors, Adam and Eve were born with two instincts; **spiritual instinct** and a **natural instinct**. But because of their first sin they lost the **spiritual instinct**. They plunged themselves, and all of their offspring, into a state bereft of **spiritual instinct**. He and all of his posterity were left laying claim to only **natural instinct**.

For the sake of clarity, let me provide you with two definitions.

- 1 **Natural instinct**: a way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is not learned: a **natural** desire or tendency that makes you want to act in a particular way. It is something all are born with and continue to possess. (Refer to the 1<sup>st</sup> message 'Nicodemus' Dilemma.)
- 2 **Spiritual instinct**: It too is a way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is not learned: a **spiritual** desire or tendency that makes you want to act in a particular way. Something all were born with, but lost through the Fall. (Refer to the 2<sup>nd</sup> message 'A Gracious Instinct-a gracious state of the heart.')

Placing a bookmark in that thought, let's begin by going back briefly to Noah's Ark in Gen. 7.16. *And the Lord shut him in.* God's innumerable saints down through Church history, through the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit, read Noah's story as if looking at their own resume. We identify with Noah. We have been *shut in away from all the world by the hand of divine love. The door of electing purpose interposes between us and the world. With Noah we've been so shut in that no evil can reach us. All floods can but lift us heavenward. Outside of the ark all was ruin, but inside all was rest and peace. Without Christ we perish, but in Christ Jesus there is perfect safety. Noah was so shut in that he could not even desire to come out, and those who are in Christ Jesus are in him forever (Spurgeon).*

In Noah's story, when the rains began to lift the ark, we are not given much detail about the daily lives of Noah and his family once God *shut them in*, until the flood subsided and they once again walked on the earth. How were their days spent in the hold? If with Spurgeon, we can view the ark as representative of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

New Testamenting has much to say about how we are to spend our lives **in** His gracious hold.

When the Lord breaths new life into a sinner, **spiritual instinct**, which he lost in the Garden many, many years ago, is graciously returned to him. While **natural instinct** is something that needs no batteries or recharge, on the other hand, the Bible teaches that there are two things necessary for **spiritual instinct** in order for it to maintain a healthy state?

I'm thinking of two words. They are **nourishment** & **nurturing**. **Nourishment** is the work of the Holy Spirit. Our emphasis this morning will be especially on the later of **nurturing**. One writer commenting on *Help Lord (Psa 12.1)* writes, *[David] evidently felt his own weakness, or he would not have cried for help; but at the same time he intended honestly to exert himself for the cause of truth, for the word "help" is inapplicable where we ourselves do nothing.*

In the same vein of Jerry Bridges' book "Growing Your Faith," **spiritual instinct** is not only **nourished**, but at the same time must be **grown** and **nurtured**. I fear too many within the Church lean on some **natural instinct** in order to kick start **spiritual instinct**, hoping to grow it through some natural means. Just as **prayer** and **meditation** are two indispensable attendants for our journey, there is another, named **nurturing**. We must also pack this for our journey, keeping all three ever at hand.

A quick interjection here ... There is a **kind of nurturing** that we must be quick to perceive as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Perhaps we are quick to **nurture** an identification with Noah, or for that matter, someone we admire or respect, some earthly object, -ism or philosophy. We may be quite knowledgeable about the details in the analogy of the ark, but do we just as readily **nurture** our **spiritual instinct** to be ever **identifying with Christ**?

Once in the hold of the **Divine Ark of Salvation**, how are we spending our moments on the tempestuous seas of life? Are we merely spending time petting our "pets" of perceived successes? Has perfect peace and safety in Him rocked us so, to where we are found to have joined those animals in their pens in beastly slumber, oblivious to what was once a deep felt loyalty to Christ?

Have we forgotten that the day when we graciously married Christ ... when we became one flesh with Him as His bride; that not one Planck length now lies between the believer and his Lord.

Now. Generally Christians are quick to talk about faith. BUT! So does the world! James tells us *even the demons believe*, and even *shudder*. It's become a "ho hum" thing. There is an absence of a key element in such, with the result of a *conversation* rendered sterile.

This is best explained and understood by looking at three very important words in Christendom which, I fear, do not get the attention that they deserve. When talk arises of faith in Christ, more often than not, these three are given very little exposure. Faith will be something very obscure and vague unless these words and their practical implications are not considered. To this habit can be traced a shallow faith bereft of a solid foundation, so characteristic in the world today. Those three words are *identification with Christ*.

We're all familiar with *identifying with Christ* in His death, burial and resurrection. These three are the three pillars on which saving faith is built. But for our final consideration, I want to look at *identifying with Christ*, more as a frame of mind, or, a governing thought

Q What does it mean to *identify with Christ*? A It is an activity of the *heart and emotions*<sup>1</sup>, and an activity of the *mind and will*<sup>2</sup>, by which, the believer *nurtures* *spiritual instinct*. It is not something that begins then ends on the day of our salvation. It is a continuing frame of mind. It is walking out of your front door with a reminder, *I belong to Christ*. It begins as a gracious work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, satisfied only when it flowers into outward fragrance and holy beauty. It is life's worthy companion, confidant, and protector. Many have become the enemy's fodder, because somewhere along the way they forgot to consciously bring it along.

### Defining *Identification with Christ*

#### I An Acute Awareness

First and foremost, *Identifying with Christ* is the fruit of a Divinely provided *acute awareness*. Acute= *having or showing an ability to think clearly and to understand what is not obvious or simple about something*.

#### II Familiarizing Ourselves with Our Surroundings

Next, before any talk about *nurturing or growing* our *spiritual instinct*, let's just pause for a moment, stand still with Noah, and observe, soaking in the practical implications of what it means to be deep within the hold of the *Ark of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Let's familiarize ourselves with the hewn wood that stands between us, and wailings of the perishing on the outside.

Perhaps, the following New Testament passage best expresses the three characteristics of *identifying with Christ* as we stand within the cavernous hull of *Ark of Our Salvation*.

*Acts 17.28: In him we live<sup>1</sup> and move<sup>2</sup> and have our being<sup>3</sup>*

Analogy: If the air around us were dyed purple, and its color could be seen in every x-ray, behind all the pulpy surfaces of the world's trees, visible in all running and accumulated waters, and apparent in every leaf and insect, all together they would insufficiently expound the implications of the above verse. *In him we live<sup>1</sup> and move<sup>2</sup> and have our being<sup>3</sup>*.

### III The Act of Identifying With Christ

*James 1.23:* For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

A simple yet profound analogy. To paraphrase, *"Anyone who is a hearer [reader] of the Word of God, but walks away from it without any attempt by grace to carry out what he has heard or read, is like the person that looks intently at his natural face in the mirror of God's Word."*

Two seemingly commendable characteristics about this kind of person.

- 1 *intently* – He is intent in his Bible reading, and faithful in church attendance.
- 2 *looks at his natural face* - He sees, understands and even acknowledges all his appearance, and duty exposed in God's Word.

By all appearances he is a very pious person. Many would judge him a very spiritual man; a pillar of the church. Yet, he only satisfies himself with this stage.

Q How can we say this? *He looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like (v.24)*. He walks away from his bible readings with no intention of daily *nurturing* an *identification with his Messiah and Savior*.

*Identifying With Christ* is such a *graceful nurturing* as to propel ourselves on to instinctively submitting to the practice of designating the lion's share of each day to prayerfully embracing the mind of Christ as our own. It is done in the same spirit as *James 1.21: receive with meekness the implanted word*, and, *Phil 2.5: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*.

 Identifying With Christ is a **nurtured** triple-edged consciousness.

- 1) It is being ever mindful of the **location** of the heart, will and actions.
- 2) It is a consciousness of my weakness and failure and my lack of power to live a life worthy of the Name.
- 3) It is a consciousness so deep that I am driven back again and again to Him in unrelenting supplication. It is replacing Jacob as he wrestled with Christ.

 Identifying With Christ is a **nurtured** consciousness of the location of the **Headwaters** of satisfaction, accompanied by a well-worn path to its **Spring**.

 Identifying With Christ is **nurtured** contemplation. It is not contemplating what He has done for us, as much as contemplating His very Person. **!** Is our faith so compartmentalized that that we don't see that while our Savior was on the cross, we were on His mind?

 Identifying With Christ is *the intertwisting of the thoughts and emotions of the renewed soul with the mind of Christ (Spurgeon).*

**!** As you travel this desert, keep this closest to you, tucked ever under your arm. Your identity with Christ, helped by prayer and meditation and an enduring faith, will be graciously used of the Lord to assist you on your journey to your eternal rest.

**!** He has promised, *But the one who looks into the **perfect law**, the **law of liberty**, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, **he will be blessed in his doing.***