

# Not I, But Christ

By: Jim Hohnberger

God has a plan of salvation and redemption for fallen man and Satan has a plan to keep fallen man in his fallen state.

Satan's entire program is built on **one** thing, one premise, keeping "self" alive, letting "self" show through.

Satan doesn't care what avenue, what course of study, what choice we make for our life's work. He doesn't care whether it is full time ministry, or whether it is digging a ditch, or a president of a large corporation. There is only one goal that Satan has, that is for us in our work, in our family, in our life, or in any activity, to let "self" be a dominant factor. And he doesn't care if it is a religious or secular work that we pursue. If he can get us to let "self" show through, have some place and he usually can, **he has us!**

When we begin to realize this then texts such as Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; yet **not I but Christ** liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God," takes on new meaning. We actually need to see that all of "Self" is to be surrendered to such an extent that it is considered to be crucified, or put to death always and continually.

Paul in Romans 6:11 says we are to **reckon "self"** to be dead. In Colossians 3:3 Paul emphatically states, "For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." John the Baptist of whom Christ said, "there hath not risen a

greater," sums it up well in John 3:30, "**He** must increase and **I** must decrease." Jesus put it this way, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In order to be "born again" **self must die**, it must be "reckoned dead" it must be "crucified," it must "decrease" to such a point that it is by grace through faith continually and constantly surrendered. But how is this done? By entering into God's program.

God's program is built upon our recognizing our need of a Saviour continually and in a faith experience constantly reaching out to Christ for help, life, strength, for wisdom and guidance in our daily lives. This is to be done to such an extent that the promptings of the flesh are not only ignored but reckoned dead. They are there, they may cry out for attention, they may demand supremacy, they may insist on having their way but the **living Christian** continually chooses another Master and "walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1

God's entire program is to keep self out of sight and to let Christ appear. That's why we read in Luke 9:23, "And He said to them **all**, if any man will come after Me, let him **deny himself** and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." There are three clear steps that if followed daily, moment by moment, will bring us into the "Not I but Christ" experience.

Lets look at how Christ simply and precisely lays out

the terms of discipleship. He says if "any man," that is all inclusive, it means this applies to absolutely everyone, there are no exclusions. If you are to "come after Me," that's living His life, walking in His footsteps then "let him deny himself." You see "**self**" is enemy #1 and unless this enemy is fully conquered then our warring against the outward enemies will amount to "no saving good."

This outward warring is putting my focus on diet reforms, health reforms, dress reforms, educational reforms, lifestyle changes, defending cherished doctrines, our knowledge of prophecy, our defense of truth, the pointing out of error, standing against worldly corruption, oppressiveness and abuses. It is putting my focus on the coming of a one world government and the mark of the beast. It's not that the reforms aren't needed, or that doctrines aren't essential, nor that we shouldn't understand present day events and stand for truth and point out error. But what "saving good" is it to war against the beast of Revelation 13, and to understand all mysteries and have all knowledge, when the beast in my own heart is still alive and ruling?

That's why Christ denounced the religious leaders of His day when he exclaimed, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the **outside** of the cup and of the platter, but **within**, they are full of extortion and excess.

"Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." Matthew 23:25-26. Christ didn't say to neglect the outward but to **FIRST** and before anything else take care of that which is within. In other words, "self" must be **dethroned** and **Christ** must **reign supreme**.

But many will not submit to this, they see this as unreasonable or unnecessary and they go about, without a fully surrendered heart, doing many wonderful works, prophesying in His name, and even casting out devils all in the name of the Lord. Yet the Lord is not **in** them, they have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. We are told in Christ's own words that He will say unto them, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:23.

Why is this? How could Christ do, such a thing? Because we did it "**our**" way and not "**His**" way. It was still "self" showing through, grabbing the attention, the praise and Christ was not the "**One**" but "**I**."

Some may think it sounds as though one were against sending Christianity to the world. But the question is not is Christianity worth sending to the world, but **is my kind of Christianity** worth sending to the world? The kind of Christianity I lived, when I was crossed last week, today, even this morning, last night - is that kind of Christianity worth sending to the world? Is not that a sobering thought? Is that not a hard question?

There is only one kind of Christianity that is worth sending to the world, and that is the kind of Christianity that Jesus lived. That's the only kind that will convert the world! A self-less life.

If my Christianity still permits "self" to have some place in it, it is not worth sending to the world. If I have not entered into the practical gospel where by a continuous faith experience in Christ my "self" is "hid with Christ in God," then I have not the kind of Christianity that will convert the world! Christ's terms of discipleship are absolute, He says, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not **all** that he hath, he **cannot** be my disciple." Luke 14:33. That **all** is not only all that we have to be used as He may direct, but it is the all that we are, the all of

"self" to be used only as He directs. Thousands upon thousands if not millions have entered into partial Christianity where some of "self" is yielded up. Where some of "self" is denied to the point where it is acceptable to the majority of professed Christians. But this is **NOT** biblical Christianity, for it leaves "self" to still have some place. Christ's "self" was always surrendered to the will of His Father. He always said, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Matthew 26:39.

We have not been able to convert the world because we have not practically, and experientially entered into the "Not I but Christ experience." Before Christianity can convert the world it must first be lived out in our own life, our own marriages, our own families. That's why it is vitally important that we all enter into the terms of discipleship, the "Not I but Christ" experience—That the world may know that the gospel can be lived—That there is daily power to live above the pull of the flesh.

In the second step of our terms of discipleship Christ said, if any man will come after me not only is he to "deny himself" but he is to "take up **his cross daily**." Luke 9:23. The cross referred to is that which crosses our "self" on a "daily" basis. This cross will be with us until our

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"mortality puts on immortality and this corruptible shall have put on incorruption." I Corinthians 15:53-54. That's why we are told, "The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and heaven, is a lifelong struggle. Without continual effort and constant activity, there can be no advancement in the divine life ... The way of return can be gained only by hard fighting, inch by inch, hour by hour..."

"We cannot allow ourselves to act from impulse. We cannot be off guard for a moment. Beset with temptations without number, we must resist firmly or be conquered..."

"The life of the apostle Paul was a constant conflict with self. He said 'I die daily.' I Corinthians 15:31. His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did God's will however crucifying to his nature." Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, pg. 452.

"It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is to be made. At every advance step heavenward it is to be renewed." *Ministry of Healing*, pg 455. Do you not see that this continual renunciation of self is what Christ was referring to when He said we were to take up our **cross daily** and follow Him.

This is utterly impossible to be accomplished in the power of the flesh for self cannot cast out self. Many of us have tried and it only amounts to "white washed sepulchers." That is why we must enter into the third step in our text which is, "Follow Me!"

Jesus life was a life of total dependence upon His Father at all times and in all places. He said, "I can of my own self do nothing." John 5:30

Jesus came to this world and tabernacled in our flesh, and fought the fight as we must. He shows us how to live above the constant pull of the flesh and He did it by a constant and continuous dependency in a power outside of Himself. "Abba Father" was his continual supplication, His nonstop plea, His strength and His wisdom. Through **continual** communion He received life from God, that He might impart life to the world. His experience is to be **ours**. (John 15:7) It is through continual communion that we receive strength and power, wisdom and direction to deny the self and let Christ reign.

As we learn never to trust "self" and to have nothing to do with "self" in all its forms—self-pleasing, self-will, self-confidence, self-trust, self-effort, self-dependency and

self-exaltation—the "*not I but Christ*" becomes our experience.

Self is the root of the whole problem. Therefore, if anyone asks, "How can I get rid of this life of compromise?" the answer would not be, "you must be more faithful in church responsibilities, you must be more reform minded, you must get involved in more outreach, you must stand in defense of the truth and point out the error." No, no this is not the solution, it is not that these are to be neglected either, but they are not the solution to the **root** problem. The solution is that a new life from above, the life of Christ must take the place of the self-life; this alone will enable us to be "more than conquerors." Romans 8:37.

Our solution is found in Jesus own words to his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Note it well! I must deny **myself** and take Jesus Himself as my life, my Saviour - I must choose. There are two lives, the self life and the Christ life; I must continually choose one of the two. "Follow me," says our Lord. "Make Me the law of your existence, the rule of your conduct; give me your whole heart; follow me, and I will care for all." This is

the solution!

It is a solemn exchange to have set before us. Daily we must choose to follow Christ, set our hearts upon Him, listen to His teachings, give ourselves to Him every day that He may be "all, and in all." Colossians 3:11. And by the **power of Christ** the denial of "self" will be a blessed, unceasing reality.

Never for one hour should we expect to reach a stage at which we can say, "I have no self to deny;" there is never for one moment in which we can say, "I do not need to deny self." No, this fellowship with the cross of Christ will be an unceasing denial of self every hour and every moment by the grace of God. Then it is that we will have entered into the "Not I but Christ" experience.

Even an acquaintance with facts and theories important in themselves, is of little value unless we put them to practical use. As we see that our only safety is in a constant distrust of self, and a dependency on Christ then it is that God can accomplish His work in us. We cannot empty ourselves of self. We can only consent and cooperate with Christ as He accomplishes the work.

For example, I arose one morning and I accepted Jesus

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as Lord of my life, knowing that He promises to "never leave me nor forsake me." Hebrews 13:5. I gave Him permission to guide and instruct me throughout my entire day. He says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." Psalms 32:8. Do you believe He is that personal, that interested in your daily affairs? I do, but sad to say some don't, in fact they fight it, perhaps because they want to manage themselves, or maybe they just don't understand how near and dear Christ can be to us.

As I went downstairs to eat, my wife had prepared a wonderful meal. There was wild rice, corn, peas, and homemade rolls. Instead of using butter, I prefer to use home canned tomatoes. In fact it's better than butter. Just before I led out in prayer, I noticed there was barely enough home canned tomatoes for one person. Guess who else really likes home canned tomatoes? My oldest son Matthew and he's sitting right next to me. I also sensed he noticed that there was only enough tomatoes for one person.

After I finished having prayer, my instant response was to reach for the tomatoes. As I began to reach for them, my son was also reaching for them. It was then that God called for my heart. "My son, give Me thine heart." Proverbs 23:26. This is where the conflict and struggle occurs. My will, or God's will? But my "self" really wanted the last of those tomatoes. Does your "self" struggle for supremacy, demanding that you act contrary to God's principles saying, "Have it *your* way"?

That is just what my flesh or self was saying, it wanted to be in control, it wanted to demand its own way. Suggesting that, "After all I paid for those tomatoes. Certainly I deserve them, I'm the head of the house, my needs should come first!" That's the voice of the flesh speaking to us. But there's also God's Spirit speaking through our conscience, directing us to live above the pull of the flesh, asking us to "deny self" and to "take up our cross" and "follow Him."

As I sensed the pull of the flesh, I said, "Lord I surrender my will in this matter, grant me your grace to live above the pull of my flesh." Instantly I withdrew my hand and the victory was sweet. This is what it means to enter into the "Not I but Christ" experience, always and only living for Him.

In all our daily experiences, the question is, will we continuously respond back to God and by His grace surrender the temptation to have things "our way" or will we move ahead and follow selfishness? This is always the

decision it comes down to, whether it's in our thought life, our conversation or our actions. God gives us all a power of choice and if we continually choose to surrender the temptation, and put our full and continuous dependence in Him, He endows us with His life and power to live above the flesh, above sin and self.

That morning I had made a commitment on my knees, that I was all His. I also agreed that I would incline my heart to live according to His will, always and continuously throughout the entire day. As God called for my heart my decision only had to be reaffirmed that it would be, "Not I, but Christ."

This is Christianity, this is the power of the gospel that so few are experiencing on a continuous basis. Will you choose to go the whole distance with God? Not just asking for the forgiveness of past sins, but the power to live above sin and selfishness now. If you will, He can free you from whatever bondage you may be in. Whether that's despair or doubt, irritation or frustration, appetite or passion, your feelings or emotions, your inclinations or impulses, you can learn to say yes to God and no to self. To simply ask for forgiveness for our past sins is not enough. We must decide to be decidedly under the control and direction of the Spirit of God.

When we give ourselves up to the real, living, acting, ruling power of God's Spirit, we have come to the right position in which we can grow. It is in utterly breaking with the flesh and the giving up of self, entirely and continuously that we finally become a free man **in** Christ Jesus and can say, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 15:58.

### Power for Living



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