

Timothy ... will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul - 1 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)

In Christ

Or don't you know that all of those who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death...burial...and resurrection.

Paul - Romans 6:3-5 (NIV)

David Kuykendall Ministries

Fall 2010

Volume 11, Number 4

Obey the five commands listed below and experience your life "in Christ." Experience the abundant life through living by grace. Notice that each command is either to believe something or to choose to do something.

THE FIVE COMMANDS

Believe

Romans 6:11

Reckon (believe) yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord

Choose

Romans 6:12

Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts

Choose

Romans 6:13a

Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin

Choose/Believe

Romans 6:13b

Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead.

Choose

Romans 6:13c

[Present] your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

We can and should obey each of these commands because Romans 6:3-5 teaches that all believers have been baptized into Jesus and as a result all believers have been baptized into his death, burial, and resurrection.

Honoring God as God To Be Thankful

Dr. Jerry Halbrook

Dr. Jerry Halbrook is pastor of the Parkway Baptist Church in McKinney, Texas. Before becoming a pastor, he served churches in several different positions. God revealed to him the message of his oneness with Christ in 1979. He is well qualified to write on the theme of the believer's oneness with Christ.

Imagine you have a Christian friend who chronically complains that God is giving him a raw deal. His beautiful wife loves him with all her heart. Their born-again children are healthy, intelligent and talented. He holds a stable, well-paying job in a struggling economy. And, despite all these blessings this brother in Christ spends most of his days dissatisfied with his lot in life.

Now imagine that your Christian barber is cutting your hair and talking to you about her recent Caribbean cruise. She expresses bewilderment that God would betray her by allowing the rain to fall for two of her five days in paradise.

What do you say? How should you respond to such inappropriate ingratitude toward God?

There are situations in which we can understand a believer's temporary disorientation. Job cursed the day of his birth, but his demonic and personal suffering ambushed him in light of what he understood about walking with God. Humanly speaking, we can sympathize with our Christian friends when their sadness relates to genuine suffering such as the death of a child, a debilitating disease, or some cruel injustice. In such cases we don't glibly quote Romans 8:28.

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Unfortunately, many of our unhappy evangelical acquaintances resemble Jonah more than Job. Jonah became angry, because God showed mercy to his enemies (Jonah 4:1-3). He wanted to die because God allowed the demise of his shade tree (Jonah 4:7-9). His delight and his depression (Jonah 4:6-11) revealed the confidence he had in his own wisdom, which displaced any confidence he might have had in God's wisdom.

The ingratitude of many American Christians, which contrasts with their privilege, sounds like paganism. According to the Apostle Paul, pagans refuse to honor God *as God*, and they do so in spite of God's marvelous creation, which reveals basic information about His nature. Paul says, "they did not honor him *as God* or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:21).

Honoring God *as God* naturally produces gratitude. If we honor God *as God*, we recognize Him *as holy*. If we honor God *as God*, we recognize Him *as sovereign*. If we honor God *as God*, we recognize Him *as wise*. If we truly honor God *as God*, we give thanks for what He, *as God*, is doing in our lives. But herein lies the problem.

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When sin entered the world through the first Adam (Rom. 5:12), we became *as (or like) gods*, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:5; 22a). In our fallen

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state we think we know what is beneficial or detrimental. In our old nature we deny God's sovereignty, doubt His holiness and challenge His wisdom. *As gods* we are at odds with God (Romans 8:7; Galatians 17a).

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The flesh is *the knowledge of good and evil*, the confidence we have in our own wisdom, the fallen state of mind that qualifies us *as gods*. Consequently, whenever we are in the flesh we express hostility toward God (Romans 8:7), because His wisdom conflicts with ours.

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This sin nature is not just a weakness; it is wretched. So how should we respond when another believer accuses God of injustice, ignorance, or impotence? Since this pagan-like refusal to honor God *as God* produces ingratitude, since ingratitude seems to be an emotional expression of professing *ourselves* to be wise, since professing ourselves to be wise is the natural behavior of the fallen (those who are *like gods*), this discontent is blasphemous.

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We should speak the truth *in love* (Eph. 4:15; 25). But we should *speak the truth*. Those of us who understand the believer's union with Christ are competent to instruct those who are struggling in the flesh (Romans 15:14). And it is appropriate to feel some righteous indignation toward the manifestations of the old nature (Ephesians 4:26). Nowhere does God tell us to comfort carnality. On the contrary, the Apostle Paul says, "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). When Christians refuse to honor God *as God* by expressing toward God their ingratitude, we should push back with the message of our oneness with Christ. We should help them recognize their sin nature. Their know-it-all attitude refuses to acknowledge God *as God* and so it refuses to thank God.

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The only way for anyone to have genuine gratitude toward God is to honor God *as God*, and the only way to do *that* is through our union with Christ. The perpetuated effect of Adam's fall on mankind is our becoming *as gods, knowing good and evil* (Genesis 3:5, 22). As long as we honor ourselves *as god*, we will never honor God *as God*, or be thankful.

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When we live *as gods*, professing ourselves to be wise, we evaluate life's circumstances through the *knowledge of good and evil*. That's why "reckoning" is such a

critical decision for the Christian. Paul instructs us in Romans 6:11 to "reckon" ourselves dead to sin (to the *as-god* mindset of *knowing good and evil*), and to consider ourselves alive unto God in union with Christ. Only then will we honor God *as God* and be thankful. In a sense, we are always reckoning something to be true of ourselves. When we fail to reckon ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in union with Christ, by default, we are reckoning ourselves *as gods, knowing good and evil*.

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When we consider ourselves dead to sin but alive unto God in union with Christ, we no longer let *the knowledge of good and evil* reign in our bodies (Romans 6:12). When we consider ourselves dead to sin but alive unto God in union with Christ we no longer present the members of our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness to the *as-god* mentality. When we present ourselves to God as people who have gone through crucifixion, burial and resurrection, in union with Christ, we present the members of our bodies to God as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13). When we cease behaving *as gods* and honor God *as God*, we give Him thanks.

As we gather with other believers this Thanksgiving, let us teach them about their union with Christ and thereby help them to honor God as God so they can truly give Him thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

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