

## Christ, the Peace Of Life

Philippians 4:4-7

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

In our last study, we read where Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "Christ lives in me..." Because of this, three consuming desires possessed his life. He wanted to *know* Christ; to *live* like Christ; and to *make Him known*. Therefore, the goal of every believer is to be like Christ.

Tonight, I want to divert your attention away from Paul to John the Baptist, for it is the life of another, which the truths presented by Paul are so clearly seen.

At some time or the other most every one of us in the religious realm has probably thought or said, "I wonder who's the greatest preacher in all the world?" Well Jesus answered that question for us in Luke 7:28, "I tell you, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist..." But Jesus goes on to say in that same verse, "Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of God is greater than he is!"

The exact interpretation of that latter phrase is open to considerable debate. Some think it to mean that anyone who by grace stands "in" the kingdom has a distinct advantage over John who stood "outside" the kingdom and merely announced its coming. Others believe it is a reference to humility that Jesus referred to in Matthew 18:4, "So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Regardless of how you choose to interpret that portion of the verse, it in no way diminishes Jesus' extraordinary praise of John's ministry. John the Baptist was truly the greatest of all the

prophets.

**But, as one studies the life and ministry of this man John, we are told something in John 10:41 about his ministry that most people have never seen.** The people made this *amazing* observation, “John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.” The King James Version says, “John did no miracles.”

**He never raised any one from the dead.** He never fed any hungry crowds by multiplying bread. He never walked on any water. **He never healed any sick bodies.** He never cast out any demons. He never turned any water into wine. The Bible simply says, “John did no miracles.”

And yet, Jesus said, “...of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John...”

**Isn't that an interesting fact?** You would think that *Elijah*, who closed the heavens that it did not rain, or *Daniel* who peacefully slept in the lion's den, would surely be singled out for that honor. Or what about *Moses* who parted the Red Sea? **Or Elisha who raised the widow's son from the dead?** But no, that is not the case at all. Jesus said the greatest prophet ever born was John the Baptist.

**Then, what on earth did John do that would evoke just an overpowering evaluation from the Lord of glory?** Here is what he did - He preached about Jesus. Apparently that is all. He just stood up and faithfully preached that there was One coming after him who would be the Savior of all men, “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” John was no miracle worker; mind you, just a preacher who talked about Jesus!

Now, in light of that interesting observation concerning John the Baptist and his ministry, I would like to draw from it two very clear and simple conclusions.

**First, I want you to notice that service is always superior to signs.** Please do not misunderstand what I am saying right here, because I believe in miracles because we serve a miracle working

**God.** But on the other hand, because we live in a world that has become almost totally obsessed with the thrill of the unusual and the lure of the spectacular, *this* first point is a lesson many present-day Christians have a hard time accepting. We are much like the unbelieving crowd who followed Jesus; many in our churches today are still shouting, "show us a sign" "do us a miracle."

**And in the midst of that carnal craving for the display of the flesh, old-time service has been relegated to the back of the class.**

Many folks want to be a part of a miracle and want to see visions, but who are not willing to pick up the phone and invite someone to meet them out front for a Worship Service. That's why we have thousands of people in our churches that will drive a hundred miles to see some so called "healer" wave a sweaty handkerchief in the air and shout "hallelujah," but wouldn't walk across the street to share the Gospel with some lost person. **And do you know why?** Because our generation believes that *signs* are better than *service*. After all, anyone can serve can't they? **Anyone can preach about Jesus and tell people how to get saved can't they?** But, oh, the miracle worker, he appeals to the eyes of the flesh.

**Child of God, do you see what I am trying to say?** John the Baptist had no miracles to qualify his ministry. He had no signs and wonders to which he could point with human pride. He just faithfully preached about Jesus; and thank God, in the reckoning of the Master, he was the greatest of all the prophets.

**And it hasn't changed one bit today.** That is why we need no miracles, no great and mighty works, and no dark mysterious experiences to qualify us as the servants of God. Do you know what really constitutes greatness in the sight of God? **Do you know the ones who are truly pleasing the Lord and bringing gladness to the angels in heaven?** It is those faithful Christians all over the world who are telling people about Jesus, and week after week are leading men and women, boys and girls, to a saving knowledge of him.

**Second, I want you to notice that position is preferred above performance.** By almost any system of evaluation you want to use, John the Baptist wasn't a very good performer. He would not weight much on the Madison Avenue scales.

**But not only that, look at John's preparation for service.** By the standards of his day, he was an unlearned man. He had no formal theological training, which the scribes and Pharisees were constantly boasting about. From a purely practical standpoint, John the Baptist was a man of little education.

**No, John the Baptist had none of those things that we look for today.** He had no place of prestige, he had no personality, he had no promotional gimmicks, and he had no formal preparation. But, thank God, John had something vastly superior to any of those things - he had *position*. He had come to the place of recognizing that the only thing that really matters in this life is to be what God wants you to be.

When all of Jerusalem came out and bowed at his feet, John said, "I am not the Christ." When all the religious honors and praises of the day were laid greatly in his lap, he stood and said, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

In commenting upon John's unswaying loyalty to his position, Jesus said in Luke 7:24, "...What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken in the wind?" **What a tremendous compliment that was.** It was the Lord of glory talking about John's steadfast commitment to his position. He was never swayed by public opinion, because John knew the difference between *position* and *performance*.

**Oh how desperately we need to learn that lesson today, for we have too many people in our churches who simply cannot distinguish between the two.** As sincere as they are, these misguided Christians, unknowingly mistake activity for anointing, busyness for blessings, and promotion for power. And so they work hard, and they perform well.

But, you see, the blessings from God have never been given on the basis of mere performance alone, for Jesus said in John 15:5, "He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit." **Abiding in Christ is a matter of position and has nothing to do with performance.** Performance is but an act of the human will, energized by the flesh, void of faith, and completely barren of spiritual fruit. Performance moves with the whims of the time. It

strives, pushes, shoves, and competes.

**But it is not so with *position*. Position is anchored in trust.** It rests and overcomes. It is securely anchored in the all sufficiency of Christ in whom "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

We have been told in John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." **Child of God, it is His willingness to love you and care for you that causes your life to be what it is today.** It is not based on your *performance*, but on your *position*. You are a child of the living God!