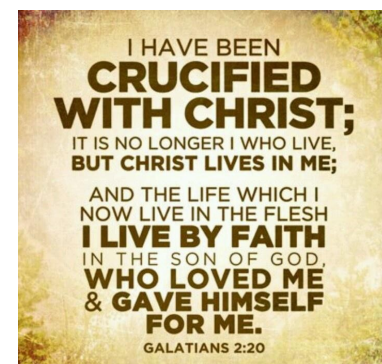




Not I

But

Christ



Not I But Christ

Our text will be taken from Galatians 2: 20 which says: **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, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**

Recently I did a lesson on faith using **1 Peter 1: 7** that says: **That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.** This verse by Peter stems from the simple fact that by now, we should have transformed ourselves into people who live totally

by faith, knowing that our God, through his son Jesus Christ, gave his life for all of us.

Having said all of this, what are we to do with this faith we have? David in **Psalm 124: 8** said the following: **Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.** David understood in this chapter and others he wrote, that his might and power was not in his ability, nor his luck, but God's ability inside of him. Spiritual help if you will. Paul made that statement very clear in the opening text we read. Paul had been crucified with Christ. He had been converted and transformed into a willing prisoner for Jesus Christ. He relished in the fact that it was not about Paul

of the gospel" (I Corinthians 9:14) or "work for a living" while you preach. Or maybe a combination of the two.

Also don't look at yourself as a hired hand of the church or a "professional counselor." You are a preacher of the word who preaches in season and out of season, both to the saint and sinner, that which is revealed — making application by reproofing, rebuking and admonishing where needed. Be thankful for those who partner with you in the matter of giving and receiving (Philippians 4:15), but do not show partiality toward them in your preaching. Your preaching must be always to please God rather than man or else you will not be a servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10).

One other piece of advice. Even if you plan to preach full-time, while you are young get a good academic or vocational education, not in order to make you a better preacher, but so you will have something to fall back on should you need to support yourself and your family should your circumstances change. If your purpose is to get an academic degree in order to get a better "preaching position" and you are "hired" by a church be-

cause of that degree then you both deserve each other because neither of you have the foggiest notion of what scriptural gospel preaching is all about.

I wish brethren could get away from this concept of "hiring and firing" preachers and think more in terms of the scriptural concept of fellowship or partnership between the one giving (the church) and the one receiving (the preacher). And if preachers would look at themselves as servants (workers) of the Lord in His work of seeking and saving the lost and doing the brethren service at times (II Corinthians 11:8) a lot of this professional concept of preaching would disappear.

...Ed Bragwell
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power of God (I Corinthians 2:4-5).

The fact that most of the first century preachers/teachers may have received what they preached by direct divine revelation does not change the nature of the gospel preacher today. The only difference is that they received their information directly and preachers today receive theirs indirectly — reading in the New Testament what the

Young brother, there is no work greater nor more satisfying than that of preaching the gospel of Christ.

first century preachers received by revelation and passed it on in their inspired writings. If a faithful man is capable of reading what they wrote (Ephesians 3:3-5), and is capable of teaching that information to others, he is qualified to preach the gospel both to the world and to the church. He does not need a degree from any college or university, accredited or otherwise, to preach. He does not have to be "called by God" other than being called by the same gospel that

called him to be a Christian.

Young brother, there is no work greater nor more satisfying than that of preaching the gospel of Christ. Do not look upon it as a "job" or a "profession" comparable to the various jobs and professions of this world. If you are looking for "a job" then go down to the employment agency or the personnel office of the company that might be hiring and put in your application. If you're looking for a "profession" then go get the education required by that profession and pass the necessary examinations needed to practice and hang out your shingle.

If you want to preach, prepare yourself by immersing yourself in a study of the Scriptures, either alone or with some knowledgeable brother(s), look for ways and opportunities to hone your skills at teaching, publicly and privately, what you have learned from the Scriptures. Then decide which course is best for you and your family — whether to devote your "full-time" to the "ministry of the word" by entering into a partnership with brethren (individually or collectively) in order to "live

anymore, it was about Jesus Christ and him crucified. **1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**

Both Paul and David realized the same thing. Do we understand this message? We sometimes jump on mega

...but before we talk about our brother with a plank in his eye, don't we need to remove the beam in ours?

churches with mega preachers about the things they teach. We think they are not preaching the correct doctrine, and this may be true; but before we talk about our brother with a plank in his eye, don't we need to remove the beam in ours? There are people who will come to hear a certain preacher and yet never show up at a regular church service. What's up with that? Is the message of Christ different between preachers? Listen to what Paul said in: **1 Corinthians 3: 4-6:**
4. For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am

of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

5. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

6. I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

Apparently we have the same problem Paul had in Corinthians. Either we haven't got this humbleness down to an art form the way Paul and David seem to have, or people are still looking at the wrong source of who is actually at work. GOD gives the increase.

We can look at **Acts 9: 34 - 42** and see the work that Peter did in healing Aeneas and bringing Dorcas back to life. These verses say that because of these miracles many people were converted to Christ. What you don't read (because it's not there) is Peter having a parade or people discussing the fact that Peter was now the new savior. Peter knew the only reason he could do these things was because of Jesus Christ in him. Peter

may not have always been humble, but in this case he was. And as we read earlier in this lesson, everything that happens to us whether good or bad is a reason to praise and glorify our Lord. It isn't about us; it is about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It isn't about us; it is about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Of all of the people you have heard preach, who would you like to hear one more time? I would imagine we all have a favorite. Did you know Jesus had a favorite? Look now at **Matt 11: 7-11:**

7. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

8. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

9. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I

say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11. Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he

Ever wonder why Jesus thought so much of John the Baptist? Perhaps one of the main reasons is John knew the same thing the other people we discussed knew. **John 3:30** He must increase, but I must decrease. Jesus told the crowd later on in this chapter the reason John was so unpopular. **Matt 11: 16-19:**

16. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

17. And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye

times sending out a circular letter anything akin to this? Even if we laid aside the "information technology skills" section, which contains tools not available in the first century, I still cannot imagine that an early church would have sought out an evangelist to work with them using such incentives and qualifications. Even had they done so, I cannot imagine where they would have found a man among those early preachers that would have met all of these qualifications.

In the first place, the New Testament concept of the gospel preacher (evangelist) is not that of one being hired to do the bidding of the congregation. He is one who has committed himself chiefly to the work of preaching the gospel to any and all — in or out of the church. He may travel from place to place or he may stay in one place for an extended period of time (I Timothy 1:3; Acts 20:31). His livelihood may come from the work of his own hands (Acts 18:3; I Corinthians 4:12) or it may come from partnering with churches and individuals who wish to have fellowship with him in his work (Philippians 4:15; Galatians 6:6). This is not an employee-employer relationship. It is a partnership (fellowship) in the

great work of preaching the gospel to save the lost in the world and edifying the church. The work accomplished by the preacher in this partnership redounds to the account of the supporting partner(s) (Philippians 4:17).

An evangelist (gospel preacher) is not a hired gun to do the work of elders or any other member of the church.

An evangelist (gospel preacher) is not a hired gun to do the work of elders or any other member of the church. He has no special qualifications other than being a faithful man (II Timothy 2:2) who knows the Scriptures (II Timothy 3:14-17) and is capable of teaching them (II Timothy 2:24). In his work of preaching he will teach whomever he has opportunity either publicly or privately (Acts 20:20). He may be either uneducated or educated. Most of the first century preachers were "ignorant and unlearned men" but they knew Jesus (Acts 4:13). On the other hand, the apostle Paul was very educated, but he made a concerted effort to downplay this fact so that the faith of those who heard him would not stand in the wisdom of men but in the

the issue with this charge being ably answered. However, I fear that the "located preacher" in many cases has evolved into the very thing that Carl and Leroy were making it out to be — a hired professional clergy. It is not because the "located preacher" practice logically leads to professionalism, but the abuse of it can and has evolved into this mind-set.

A good example of this concept recently appeared on the website of the Central church of Christ in Athens, Alabama. The page states that they are "seeking a full-time Associate Minister with a focus on College and Career and Young Couples age members (generally 18 year old singles through young adults with pre-school age children). This congregation has an average attendance of over 400 and is currently served by a senior minister, a youth minister, a part-time children's minister, and a part-time secretary, in addition to seven shepherds"

They say that "salary is highly competitive and will be negotiated with the candidates based on education and experience. Benefits include health insur-

ance and retirement allocations, moving expenses, merit and cost of living raises, professional development, paid vacation, sick leave, and holidays, plus sabbatical leave"

"Qualifications:

- Called by God;
- Happily married to a Christian woman;
- Bachelor degree, or higher from an accredited university program in Bible or Ministry;
- At least 3 years of full-time experience in a church ministry environment;
- Effective and proven teaching/communication skills, including writing and speaking abilities;
- Information technology skills such as computer, internet, website maintenance, in-depth knowledge of social media use, audio/visual systems;

Desire a candidate with a gift for worship leading in song." Now, my brethren, this is an example of professionalism gone to seed. Can you imagine a congregation in New Testament

have not lamented.

18. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

19. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

John the Baptist was a forerunner of Christ, and yet, he was humble. He was not like a reed shaking in the wind, bending to public opinion, doing what seemed right when in fact it was wrong. John told things like they were. Remember **Mark 6: 17-20:**

17. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

18. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

19. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and

would have killed him; but she could not:

20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

This man, John the Baptist, was in the desert eating locust and wild honey and wearing clothes of camel skins, not

Does John sound like a person you would want to walk 5 miles to hear?

soft raiment like a person in a king's palace. Does John sound like a person you would want to walk 5 miles to hear? 10 miles? How about 1 mile? Herod knew John was a just and holy man. This of itself says a lot don't you think? I am sure even in this time, people wanted to listen to someone who would make them laugh, make them feel good about themselves. And sin? Oh yeah, we have that but let's not talk about that subject. We don't want to hear how miserable we really

are, or how all the things we have are useless without Christ in our lives. We don't want to repent! We like ourselves just the way we are thank you very much.

Jesus said these people had a problem with the message. They were hearing the right tune; but, they were not dancing, they weren't crying, they seem to be totally unaffected by what John was saying to them. Can you imagine that? Hearing the gospel of repentance and not being affected by the truth? Seems the people in Jesus' time are just like the people in our time. **2 Timothy 4: 3-4: 3. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;**

4. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

It may sound rather cruel to say, but it happens every Sunday. People sit in the pews hearing the word of God and feeling nothing. Good lesson but are they changed by it? Are they happy? Are they

sad? Does it have to be a certain preacher or a certain message for us to be moved by the word of God?

Similar things were said about Christ. They even said he was casting out demons by the power of the devil. Remember his comeback to those people in **Luke 11:18**; Jesus said: **If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?** Jesus always knew what was on their mind. He also knew, perhaps like John did, that no matter what he did he wasn't going to please everyone. But the message never changed.

So what have we learned? Having great faith to be able to remove mountains and being humble is not an easy task. Lots of people are listed in Hebrews 11. They all had faith! They also knew it wasn't about them. Their lives had been transformed and they understood without this transformation, without bowing themselves down to Jesus Christ, none of the things they did would be possible. **Philippians 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in**

heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Are we still learning this lesson? Are we still unable to humble ourselves? Have we not transformed ourselves sufficiently enough to grasp the fact that it isn't about us? **James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.** The only person who knows if we are truly humble is our Lord. Perhaps this is

why some are still waiting for this lift up. We haven't humbled ourselves in the sight of God, with men maybe, but not God.

Perhaps when we determine that we cannot fool God at anytime, we can start humbling ourselves to the Lord in our actions each and every day of our lives. Then we shall see what James and Peter and David all knew...**Not I But Christ.**

...Bruce Langham
Fort Smith, Arkansas

Professional Preachers

The trend toward developing a "professional clergy" among churches of Christ has been in the making for some time now. More and more, both churches and preachers, have come to view gospel preachers as professionals much like the professions of this world. Churches seek out and "hire" these professionals much in the same way that school and corporate boards hire their executive personnel. A larger church may "hire" several of these professionals with each

assigned an area of responsibility.

In the early days of my preaching, the "located preacher" issue was a big issue. Leading the way among the "no located preacher" side of the issue were men like Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. They painted a picture of the "located preacher" (a preacher who was supported by the local church and did most of his preaching there) as being a "professional clergyman" A number of debates were held on