

What Counts is a New Creation

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinth 5:17

There are three New Testament verses that start with the phrase: "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, what counts is..." Each of these three verses completes the ending of this phrase with a different statement: What counts is **a new creation**; what counts is **faith working through love**; and what counts is **obeying God's commands**. When considered together in logical order, these three form a progression of truth that reveal how God works His eternal purpose in us for His glory. Let's consider the first verse: "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is **a new creation** (Galatians 6:15)." The Bible discounts circumcision and anything else man can do to achieve righteousness. Only a righteousness based on God's new creation counts for anything. The new creation is the heart of the New Covenant and the basis of our new birth and salvation. The old creation began in Adam. The new creation began in Christ. God's new creation is the body of Christ, the church. But before God could make His new creation, He had to first deal with the old creation, the Adam nature. God had to take care of not only its fruit (our sinful actions); He had to remove its very root (our sinful nature).

Therefore, Jesus Christ died not only to forgive us for our sins; He also died to free us from our sinful nature. Since we were born into sin, we had to die to be freed from sin. God accomplished this by including us in His Son's death. When Christ was crucified, our sinful nature died with Him (Romans 6:6). When Christ was raised from the dead, we were raised with Him as a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:5-6). Jesus Christ now lives in us (2 Corinthians 13:5; Colossians 1:27). Thus God used the death of His only Son to perform a

divine heart transplant by which He replaced our terminally sin-sick heart with His Son's holy heart. This is the mystery of the gospel and the foundation of God's new creation - His church.

Now let's consider the second verse: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is **faith working through love** (Galatians 5:6)." Faith, which is motivated by love, is the way we work out our salvation. "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16)." This is the way faith works. If we lay down our soul-life (our natural attitudes and abilities) for Christ's sake and brethren's sake, we abide in God's love and true faith. If we do not lay down our soul-life for the brethren, we do not abide in God's love and we don't know Him (1 John 4:8). If we try to live the Christian life by dying to self through our own willpower and moral strength, we quench the power of Christ's Spirit from working in us. Therefore, having begun by the Spirit when we were born again, we now refuse to rely on our natural strength to live the Christian life (Galatians 3:3; Philippians 3:3).

Knowing we have died with Christ, we now live by faith in the Son of God who lives in us (Galatians 2:20). As we abide (remain united) in the power of Christ's death, He abides in us with the power of His resurrection life (John 15:4). "For if we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection (Romans 6:5)." Thus faith in Jesus Christ and His completed work on the cross is not only the basis for our spiritual birth (our salvation); it is also the only basis for our spiritual growth (our sanctification). This is the true gospel. "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith (Romans 1:17).'"

Finally, let's now consider the third verse: "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing; what counts is **obeying God's**

commands (1 Corinthians 7:19)." Obeying God's commands is the outcome of our sanctification and the confirmation of our faith. Our obedience springs from our faith in Christ's triumph on the cross - when Christ died; we also died to the world (Galatians 6:14). Do you really want to know Jesus? Jesus Christ said He would reveal Himself to you **if** you obey Him (John 14:21). "We know that we have come to know Him **if** we obey His commands (1 John 2:3)." Everyone who obeys God's commands abides in Him and He in them; everyone who does not obey God's commands does not know Him (1 John 3:6 & 24). "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead (James 2:26)." This is what the apostle Paul called "the obedience that comes from faith (Romans 1:5)."

It is possible for us to obey God commands because of God's divine heart transplant, by which He made us a new creation in Christ. "Because everyone who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:7)." Everyone who is born of God is able to obey His commands and overcome sin because Christ who lives in us is greater than Satan, the ruler of this world (1 John 3:9; 4:4). "But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life (Romans 6:22)." The Bible says that everyone who obeys Jesus Christ inherits eternal life. "He is the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9)."

If we are trying to be moral apart from faith in the cross of Christ, we are practicing a counterfeit Christianity not based on God's new creation. "Are you so foolish? After beginning by the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by your human effort (Galatians 3:3)?" God's new creation in Christ is the only foundation for the true Christian life and the true church of Christ.

"For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in our natural ability." Philippians 3:3