

## REAL PEOPLE

### INTRODUCTION

We all want to create a good image of ourselves. The term used today is "branding". Each one of us has a personal brand if you like. When people see us, they identify us with our brand.

For example, if I had a can of Coke in my hand, we would immediately identify with the brand, we would know the colour of the liquid inside and what it tastes like. Some people would get thirsty immediately, while others would think, "how can you drink that stuff?"

When it comes to Christians, we are no different. We want people to see us as good people, believers, strong in faith, on top of our circumstances and victorious. It's almost a Christian mold we are trying to fit ourselves into.

Sadly, for many, if not all of us, what we show on the outside for people to see, is not necessarily a true reflection of the "real me".

Today I want to focus on the "real me". The version of ourselves that only we ourselves, and God know.

### MESSAGE

#### A LOOK AT GOD'S LOVE

The only way we can be real people, taking off the mask that we allow others to see is by coming to realise the extent of God's love for us.

**Ephesians 3:14-19**(NKJV) For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul prayed because he knew the people needed an understanding of God's love.

- Firstly, we are identified with the family of God. We are part of His family!
- Secondly, God gives us strength in the inner man to have Christ live in our hearts through faith.
- Finally, we are made to realise and comprehend the length and depth and width and height of the love of Christ which goes beyond normal human comprehension.
- Why – so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God!

Only when we realise how much God loves us, can we be filled with all of His fullness!

***Today I want to challenge you to ask God to give you a revelation of His love in Christ toward us.***

Understanding God's love is the basis for the balance of this message.

## **WHAT DO REAL PEOPLE LOOK LIKE?**

Here are some Biblical examples of real people:

- Moses, the friend of God had a temper on him! He murdered the Egyptian that he caught beating the Hebrew slave. Much later in life, he struck the rock to bring water out instead of speaking to it as God had instructed him.
- Samson, the who was consecrated with a Nazarite vow struggled with anger and lust issues which eventually caused him to lose his strength and become a slave.
- David was an adulterer and a murderer and had tremendous family problems.
- David was also troubled and battled deep despair. In many of the Psalms, he writes of his anguish, loneliness, fear of the enemy. Solomon struggled with depression – just read Ecclesiastes – “it’s all vanity”. Elijah was discouraged, weary, and afraid. After great spiritual victories over the prophets of Baal, this mighty man of God feared and ran for his life, and there in the desert, he sat down and prayed, defeated and worn: **1 Kings 19:4b** “I have had enough Lord, he said. Take my life, I am not better than my ancestors.”
- Hosea was married to a prostitute – he had some marital issues for sure!
- Paul struggled with his own flesh - **Romans 7:24** “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Who knows if this is not the thorn in the flesh that he wrote about.

These were not the holier than thou people that we often romanticize them to be, they were real people like you and me that had to deal with real problems, real temptations and real struggles.

**But God loved them!** Many of them you can read of in the great chapter of biblical faith, Hebrews 11, which also goes on to describe, in detail the challenges they faced. That same chapter says this about them:

**Hebrews 11:39-40** (NKJV) And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

- These people were not perfect...
- But...they obtained a good testimony because of faith.

In the movie Ragamuffin, about the life of Rich Mullins, a gifted song writer and singer who wrote the song, "Awesome God", I was touched by his raw faith even though he struggled with acceptance from his own father and the deep sense of insecurity it resulted in. He struggled with loneliness, depression and alcohol. He rebelled against the "mold" of Christianity and the "image" that people let others see, but somehow, carrying him through all his struggles was the knowledge that Jesus loved him regardless.

***What real challenges, problems and temptations are we dealing with today?***

***What is it that we don't want others to see, the hidden stuff?***

***Do you think that any of that reduces God's love for us in Christ Jesus?***

## **WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE, NOT WORKS**

Sometimes we forget the basics of Christianity. We forget the fact that we are saved by grace and not by works! As Angus Buchan always says, "Believers go to heaven, not good people".

**Ephesians 2:8** (NKJV) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

The NLT states, "And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God".

But we try to live right anyway and we try to keep up to the church's standards of Christianity, but we fail miserably. And **we judge others because they are not living up to our standards of Christianity.**

The sad truth is that **none of us are prefect** – that will only come when we are transformed at the rapture.

It is the goodness of God in our life and His Spirit dwelling within us that will help us to change, not our own feeble efforts. I often tell people, "**stop trying and start trusting**"!

***Are you battling in your imperfection, does it make you feel far from God?***

***Are you willing to accept the love of Christ for you today?***

His love goes so far beyond our ability to live right from Him. It's only when we grasp and embrace the love of Christ for us that we can start to love and accept ourselves and gain true freedom in Christ.

## **JESUS IS NOT WORRIED ABOUT OUR BACKGROUND**

Some people worry about their background – "am I good enough for God?"

In the Bible, we read of Rahab the prostitute in the genealogy of Christ. We see Jesus choosing rough fishermen as His disciples. Do you really think Jesus is worried about our history and our background? He is much more interested in your heart and in your future.

Jesus makes no distinction, He invites everyone to come to Him: **Revelation 22:17** (NKJV) And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. **Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.**

All we need is a desire – regardless of our background.

***Are we willing to stop believing that the love of Christ is conditional on our background? Can we forget the past and come to Jesus today just as we are?***

## **GOD IS NOT WORRIED ABOUT WHAT WE LOOK LIKE**

Sometimes we feel inadequate and unable to break through to the love of Christ because of what we look like:

- We may be dressed in shabby, dirty, old clothes.
- We may be dressed casual or smart.
- We may not be attractive.
- We may not be physically strong.
- We may not be able to pray fancy prayers or read the Bible out loud in a fluent manner.

### **Do you really think the Lord is concerned about that?**

**1 Sam 16:7** But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Here's another area where we fall into the "Christian mold", or what man thinks of us. Jesus loves us just as we are, not because of the way we dress, or are able to dress or because of what we look like?

***Have you been feeling inadequate as a believer because of what you wear or what you look like?***

***Have you maybe judged others because of what they wear or what they look like?***

***What does your heart look like? That's what God is interested in!***

## **THE REAL QUESTION**

The real question is this: **Do I really believe that Jesus loves me?**

## CONCLUSION

**John 3:17-18a** (NKJV) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned;

Jesus came, not to condemn us for our sins, but to pay for them Himself. We simply need to believe and accept that He loved us that much. We have amazing grace!

Sometimes we struggle with our flesh, our weaknesses and inadequacies. We try to put on a brave face and make as though all is just fine, but really, it's not. What we need to realise is that **Jesus loves us regardless!**

Today we are encouraged to accept God's Amazing Grace through Jesus Christ His Son. Let us believe and trust in Him. The rest will naturally fall in place. Let us come today, just as we are and receive God's amazing grace!

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see. (John Newton)*