

INTRODUCTION

We often say that Americans are foreigners because they are different from us. However, we forget that actually Chinese are the true foreigners in this country. When you first came to U.S. there had to be some adjustments – different food, festivals and culture, etc. In the process of trying to blend in it may create some laughable moments. Once I was chatting with some brothers about asking for a straw at fast-food restaurants. We did not know what that thing is called in English. One brother said: “I just asked the attendant for a tube.” Another person echoed: “I was as smart as you, but I called it a pipe.” The third brother was the most creative: “I know adding “er” to a verb will convert an action word to an instrument. So I just told the guy that I needed a sucker.” For your information, sucker is not necessarily a bad word. It can be referred to someone who is annoying or who is easily fooled.

When we come to a new environment we need to make adjustments. Paul told us in Romans 6 that when we became Christians there are some revolutionary changes inside us. Those changes on the inside would result in changes on the outside. Paul told us that in Christ we can be different because we are now different.

EXPLANATION

1. 與基督完全認同 We Identify with Christ

First, Paul told us that when we accept Christ we identify ourselves with Him. In what ways do we identify ourselves with Christ? Let us look at **verses 5-6**: 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. There is a Greek word appears three times in these two verses that is used as a prefix. The NIV translation renders it “with.” It carries the meaning of “together.” It is like the prefix “co” in English. We describe our colleagues as our coworkers, and we cooperate with those teammates to complete a project. Paul told us that when we accepted Christ we co-crucified with Him, co-died with Him and co-resurrected with Him. Although the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ took place more than two thousand years ago when a person received Christ it was as if he went back to cross at Golgotha and went through the whole process together with Christ. A familiar classical hymn “Were You There?” captures the spiritual truth of it. Every stanza of the song begins with a question: “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” “Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?” “Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?” “Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?” If you are a Christian the answer to all four questions is “yes.” Through baptism a person re-live the sequence of things. Our church uses immersion as the usual mode of baptism to remind the candidates that they were crucified, nailed to the cross, buried in the tomb and resurrected from the dead with Christ. An important truth we have to bear in mind is that baptism does not grant salvation to a person. The four brother and sisters receiving baptism today were saved at the moment they committed their lives to Christ, whether it happens a few months or a

few years ago. Their baptism is a testimony of their salvation, rather than the procedure to acquire it. They have identified with Christ when they accepted Him.

2. 在基督裡的新生 Our Identity in Christ

Paul told us that in Christ we can be different because we are now different. A person is already different when he identifies himself with Christ. Because of that, he now has a new identity in Christ. Paul said in **verses 17-18**: 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. We used to be slaves to sin, but in Christ we have been set free in sin and have become slaves to righteousness. These transitions are results of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Paul mentioned that in **verse 4**: We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. When Christ rose from the dead and received a new life all who are in Christ also were given a new life. We are beneficiaries because of what happened to Christ. Nowadays merger of companies is a common way to survive in a competitive world. After a merger two companies that used to be opponents in the business came under the roof. Trade secrets became family secrets and competitors became colleagues. Because of the decision from the management all the employees in two former companies became members of the new company. Similarly, because of what Christ did on the cross He gave a new identity to His believers. As a result, Christians are no longer slaves to sins. Sin have no control over us any longer. If we rely on our Lord we can stop sinning. Even when we sin the Holy Spirit inside us would convict us of our offence to God. Such guilty feeling would lead us to confession. On the positive side, Christians are now slaves of righteousness. Though we are still doing the same things as students, employees, house-wives or retirees we do everything for the sake of God's glory. Some students may use to be satisfied with passing grades to keep their parents happy. They should now try their very best in school to please the Lord. Some employees may be accustomed to doing the minimum at work to fulfill the requirements. They should now strive to excellence to witness Christ in their work places.

CONCLUSION

In Christ we can be different because we are now different. We have identified ourselves with Christ, and we were given a new identity as slaves of righteousness in Christ. Accepting Christ is only the beginning of our new life. We should continue to grow spiritually to deepen our understanding of God's love and to practice how to live our new life for Christ. The more we commit ourselves to Christ the more we can live a life that pleases Him. I pray that this message would be a mutual encouragement to the four brother and sisters who will receive baptism today, and to every believer too.