

Christ Alive Here

“Those who are living by their natural inclinations have their minds on things human nature desires; those who live in the spirit have their minds on **spiritual things**... while the spirit looks forward to life and peace.” (Romans 8:5-6) NJB*

This passage is not saying that it is wrong to be human. When someone messes up, we say, “Well, he’s only human.” However, being human is not a sin. Listen to this particular human’s verse:

“Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul – and sings the tunes without the words – and never stops at all.” *Emily Dickenson*

Here’s another you might have heard:

“Before you act, listen. Before you read, think. Before you spend, earn. Before you criticize, wait. Before you pray, forgive. Before you quit, try.” *Ernest Hemmingway*

I think both verses are inspired writing. But both were written by fallible, limited human people. I would imagine that the verses came to them in a moment of stirring and creativity. Creativity is defined as the ability to create. Maybe it would be better to say the ability to co-create, because I believe these moments come when people allow themselves to be in the freedom of Christ’s grace. They are allowing themselves to let the Creator come alive in them.

I had seen pictures of the Grand Canyon but I remember the first time I saw the actual Grand Canyon. It was breathtaking. I literally gasped with inspiration. Inspiration – “In-spire” means to breathe in.

In Romans 8:9-11 Paul says this:

“You however, **live** not by your natural inclinations, but by the spirit since the Spirit of God has made a home in you... and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead has made his home in you, the one who raised Christ Jesus from the dead, will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.”

Of course, in my human nature, I have often run away from God in Christ and tried to escape his Spirit’s work in me. But listen to how Paul explains why. He says “The law of the Spirit which gives life in Christ Jesus has set you free...” That is, we are given freedom by Christ. In Romans 7 Paul made it clear, to me anyway, that alone I am lost.

If I depend only on myself, on my mind and my body, my human nature will eventually lead me into darkness, disconnectedness, and spiritual death. Romans chapter eight, however, shifts the mood from disillusionment, to life and freedom. The life of the Spirit in our hearts as Christians means that The Spirit of Christ turns on the lights. Or to put it another way, he turns on the spigot of grace. If I allow it, Christ is alive in me. Of course, that’s a big **if**. I can do all kinds of things that block me from Christ’s life in me. For example, something as simple as cleaning the cat boxes. I can do that in a spirit of resentment and anger – OR - I can do it in the Spirit of Christ. It is my choice.

When we draw on our creative selves, we are opening ourselves to glorify God by what he has inspired us to do – even if we aren’t aware of it. In fact, creativity can be a prayer or worship. And the creative process is valuable even if the result is not a saleable product. The creative process itself is not a commodity – some THING to be sold. We should honor our creativity by using it for good, by allowing ourselves to experience the Spirit as we write, paint, or sculpt, as we raise our children, do our jobs, or write a letter to a loved one. The Spirit delights in us when we surrender to the creativity he has inspired. We are made in the image of God. Let us rejoice and be glad in that, and in our creative work.