

"All In"
Pastor Wally Contreras
September 20, 2020

"...and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied." (Acts 9:19-31)

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At the time of Saul's conversion, Jesus told Ananias, "For I will show him (Saul) how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (Acts 9:16) The Message's translation says it this way: "And now I'm about to show him what he's in for - the hard suffering that goes with this job." So, how much have I suffered for His name's sake? Have I experienced "the hard suffering that goes with the job"? If so, how so? If not, why not?

John Piper said, "What was the source of this radical and painful obedience? The answer is given in 1 Corinthians 15:20: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." In other words, Christ was raised, and I will be raised with him. Therefore, nothing suffered for Jesus is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58)... This is a radical call for us to look hard at our present lives to see if they are shaped by the hope of the resurrection." Piper concluded with this question: "Do we make decisions on the basis of gain in this world, or gain in the next?" And???

The hope of the resurrection changed the way Paul lived. It gave him the power to go without comforts and pleasures that many people feel they must have in this life. How about me? Does my desire for comforts and pleasures in this life interfere with my ability to make an eternal difference? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally spoke of the Gospel message that Saul proclaimed in the synagogues, that "Jesus is the Son of God". Why do some find it difficult to share the Gospel with others and why?

In Matthew 4:5-7, I'm reminded that "...the devil took [Jesus] to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.' Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" In his message given on May 6, 1866, C.H. Spurgeon said, "The first effort of the devil was to sap the foundations of the Savior's strength with a doubt. The devil whispers to him, "If—if thou be the Son of God." Faith is the Christian's strength; he who doubts not staggers not. Unbelief is the source of our chief weakness. As soon as we begin to distrust our feet begin to slide. Hence, Satan, knowing this, injects that cruel and wicked suspicion, "If — if thou be the Son of God." Notice the point of attack: it was our Lord's Sonship. Satan knows that if he can make any of us doubt our interest in the Father's love, doubt our regeneration and adoption, then he will have us very much in his power. How can I pray, "Our Father which art in heaven," if I do not know him to be my Father? If the dark suspicion crosses my mind that I am no child of his, I cannot say with the prodigal, "I will arise and go unto my Father," for I do not know that I have a Father to go to." In what way(s), if any, has Satan been planting seeds of doubt in my mind regarding my relationship with God and His Son? Explain.

What are some strategies to help keep this truth foremost both in my heart and my mind?

John Piper said that "[w]hen Paul said that Jesus is the Son of God, we understand him to mean that Jesus is God. He is not a mere man or a high-ranking angel in human form. He is truly man and truly God. When we call him Son of God, we mean that he is of the same nature as God. Fathers create things unlike themselves, but they beget sons like themselves. C. S. Lewis puts it like this: When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers, and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make (or create), you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, and man makes a wireless set (or a computer) . . . So, how important is it that I hold fast to the Gospel message that Jesus is the Son of God and why?

Review Acts 2:7, Acts 2:12, Acts 9:21, Acts 10:45 and Acts 12:16. Is it the person or the message (or both) that results in people being so "amazed" ("Astonished; confounded with fear, surprise or wonder", Webster 1828) in these passages of Scripture?

So God spent three years training Saul (Galatians 1:15-20) so that Saul could, among other things, "confound[] the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ". How much time have I spent recently in my "training/increasing in strength" by God regarding who Jesus is?

One blogger posted recently (<https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-evidence-that-Jesus-Christ-is-the-Son-of-God>) that "There is NO evidence that Jesus is "the son of God". An ancient religious group's tales/beliefs (the christian's beliefs about Jesus as "son of God" as found in their earliest writings, the new testament) are ONLY evidence of what those particular people believed. Their

beliefs are NOT evidence that those beliefs were true. By the way, the question of a “god” even being real, isn’t even sure anyhow... The early christians just made use of mythic thought patterns of their day, in their tales of Jesus as the messiah (christ). Whether or not Jesus LITERALLY IS “god” in the flesh, (son of God) as the christians thought, is a matter of mythic speculation.” Where does one begin to engage such a person as this and why?

Do I normally differentiate between knowing the truth, trusting the truth, and submitting to the truth? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Have I ever had a “But Barnabas” moment where someone came along side me and shared an encouraging word or introduced me to someone who could help me and how did that impact me?

Pastor Wally spoke of the church being our family, not just being a welcoming church, but foremost being an inviting church. The theme song for “Cheers” reminds me that: “Making your way in the world today takes everything you've got. Taking a break from all your worries, sure would help a lot. Wouldn't you like to get away? Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came. You wanna be where you can see, our troubles are all the same. You wanna be where everybody knows your name.” Being a church where everybody knows my name and they're glad that I came is a welcoming church, but what does an inviting church look like?

How can I share the feeling that I get being a part of a church family with my “Who’s Your One”?

Will I invite my “Who’s Your One” to come to church with me next week?

Some suggestions for increasing your strength to have a defense as to who Jesus is:

Books: “The Case for Christ”, Lee Strobel
“Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World”,
Josh & Sean MacDowell
“Who Moved the Stone?” Frank Morison
“Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics”, R.C. Sproul

RightNow Media: “Think Like a Detective”, J. Warner Wallace
“Cold-Case Christianity”, J. Warner Wallace
“Foundations of Apologetics”, Ravi Zacharas
“Hath God Said”, R.C. Sproul
“Justified by Faith Alone”, R.C. Sproul