

## Someone More Than We Are

One of the most delightful memories of my youth was when my brother and I would claim our little cubby holes behind the luggage on long car trips and take our pile of DC and Marvel Comics and read them until the sun went down. We would then lie strategically on our backs in our station wagon so we could see the moon and stars out the window and then doze off dreaming we had become the super heroes we had read about all day.

The American fascination with superheroes has apparently not abated. Major motion pictures have recently been made featuring these heroes that we fantasized of in our youth such as the Green Lantern and Captain America. They will soon be releasing one based on one of my favorites, the Flash and within a year and a half yet another Superman movie will be released (we just cannot get enough of this hero). Here is the theme in almost all of these superhero movies: 1. There is a guy or girl that is the consummate loser or just overall average, never-amount-to-anything type person. 2. This loser doesn't have it within themselves to overcome their chronic proneness to attain one inch above their averageness. 3. There is a really bad guy that who is causing ruin to society that cannot be stopped by normal punitive measures. 3. An external force outside of the loser enables them to perform super human feats. 4. There is an ultimate showdown between the good guy (former loser) and the really bad guy. 5. The good guy wins and society is saved. Time would fail if we included a side-trip to investigate why these stories almost always include a romance that the loser would have never won in his or her "normal" phase, but now these super people win "super" love interests.

Are there not parallels displayed in our fiction, revealing that we are crying out to be someone more than we are? We have had our hippies go to the desert to find themselves and really did not like what was found. The recent biography of Steve Jobs, now equated as our 21st Century "Thomas Edison", discloses that Jobs went to India after deciding he was going to search out the Maharaj-ji, the guru who had influenced much of the sixties' hippie movement. He said, "For me it was a serious search; I'd been turned on to the idea of enlightenment and trying to figure out who I was and how I fit into things." One of his best friends, Daniel Kottke said, "There was a hole in him, and he was trying to fill it." During this time of wandering, Jobs' official and designated biographer, Isaacson said, "He was not able to achieve inner calm." Much of modern psychology encourages us to be ourselves, accept ourselves and if we don't like ourselves, lower our standards of expectation. If being ourselves is inclusive of being dedicated to Christ, with His power working through us in fulness, then yes, accept who we are in Christ. If, on the other hand, we are accepting ourselves in a backslidden state operating on the desires of the flesh, we need to understand this will bring no relief to the searching person. In our thoughts today, I would like for you to concentrate on why we long to be more than who we are and how through Christ this can be attained.

### **1. We are all, in fact, born losers.**

Romans 3: 10,11 and 23 says, *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* Isaiah 53:6a says, *"All we like sheep*

*have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way....*" The Bible further states in Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25, *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."*

We live in a day that defines politically correct as that which embraces accepting yourself for who you are, sin and all. A leading pop-star has even made a song popular entitled (if my memory serves me right), "I Was Born this Way." If I may save the discussion for another day concerning what we are born with, I would like to say that according to the Bible, we are born alienated from God. Ephesians 4:18a says, *"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God...."* We cannot trust ourselves because we are untrustworthy. We cannot believe in ourselves because we are unreliable. God says, *"...yea, let God be true, but every man a liar..."* (Romans 3:4). Psalm 58:3 says, *"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray and soon as they be born, speaking lies."* We sometimes try to bolster our feeling of goodness by comparing our sins with other peoples' sins. We see our neighbor's sin as wrong because we are not tempted with it. We have a tendency to look over our sin, because by nature we defend our wrong if we are not willing to repent of our wrong. Sometimes we attempt to cover our sin by taking the broad brush approach, which means anything and everything goes and should be quite acceptable.

## **2. We may become born again winners by outside intervention.**

This is why the Gospel means good news; we don't have to accept our perpetually sinning self -- we may become born again. II Corinthians 5:17 says, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

New York Times' movie reviewer, A. O. Scott writes that much of our entertainment is "metaphysical second chance comedy." He referred to movies such as "It's a Wonderful Life." Here we see George Bailey played by Jimmy Stewart portrayed as a loser who is about to end his life, but is miraculously saved by an angel named Clarence (outside intervention sent by God). In the end, George is given a second chance -- why even the angel, who is a loser-type, gets his wings! Our comics are revealing: a man receives supernatural strength from a green lantern from another galaxy; Captain America, a formerly ninety-eight pound weakling is made four times stronger than the strongest man as a result of an experiment from an outside source. And where would Clark Kent (Superman) be without the fact that his birth was outside of planet earth's orb in a faraway, now defunct planet called Krypton? There is no new thing under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9), is there? Philippians 4:13, dogmatically states, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* Our outside source is Christ! Through Him we become so much more than we are!

## **3. The External Power Source becomes the Internal Driving Force that changes the external world around us for eternal good.**

The best that mortal man has to offer is just not good enough. Steve Jobs, mega-successful founder of Apple, lived by the philosophy he called "reality distortion field." He believed that by the sheer power of your will you can bend reality until it conforms with your pre-conceived concept. He lived by this rule and became tyrannical to anyone or anything that dared stand in his way. Eventually, he died at the hands of his

philosophy -- by his own admission. He was diagnosed with a treatable cancer. When the doctors strongly attempted to persuade him to have the corrective surgery, he believed he could “stare” this thing down and bend the reality. The reality? His untreated illness killed him.

I cannot resist making this application: many alcoholics believe they can overcome drink, dope addicts believe they can overcome dope and people with run-a-way sexual addictions believe they can turn over a new leaf and become victors. We cannot become Christians (Christ-like) without Christ! He is the External Power Source who becomes the Internal Driving Force to change not only us, but, thank God, the world around us. Sound like a super-hero story? Well it is -- and the fact of it all is that it is the greatest story ever told. Here it is: Christ, the outside influence came to this wicked earth and specifically to wicked people of whom I am one. He died for losers like ourselves. He rose again and moves into our life by faith and gives us power to change the world around us. It is real, it is miraculous and this life is available to whosoever will. *“...And whosoever will, let him take...”* (Revelation 22:17b).

-Pastor Pope-