



Dear Neighbour,

The Oscar Pistorius murder trial has highlighted the seriousness of calling yourself a Christian. At the outset of his trial, Oscar stated that he was a Christian and in that moment the world judged Christianity by his actions. I cringed in embarrassment as I considered the possible effect his words were having on the international hearers...

Oscar also correctly stated that he still has the capacity to sin as a Christian and that Jesus came to earth to save sinners. Yes, Christians do still sin after they have received forgiveness for their sins, and thankfully they have daily access to God's forgiveness: ***If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*** (1 John 1:8-9). That is the best news we will ever hear! Oscar, and everyone reading this letter, can find total forgiveness for their sin in Jesus Christ, as He is the only One qualified to remove our sins and make us righteous in the sight of God.

However, when Christians habitually sin they are not just affecting themselves, but more importantly, they are impacting everyone else around them – and in Oscar's case, the whole world. As Christians we are to make our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the gospel message attractive to unbelievers, as stated in the following verse: ***...that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (Titus 2:10b).***

The word 'adorn' is the Greek word *kosmeō*

from which we get the English word 'cosmetics'. As Christians, our lives either cause unbelievers to view Jesus in an unfavourable light and cause them to turn away from Him or our lives can draw people to Jesus. I considered the seriousness and the great responsibility we have as ambassadors of Christ:ÂÂÂÂÂ

***Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God***

(2 Corinthians 5:20). As I pondered Oscar's predicament I began to realise that many people who call themselves Christians have come to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and recognise their need for a SAVIOUR – One who can save them from their sins – but have failed to recognise Jesus Christ as their LORD – One to whom they submit every aspect of their life.

***Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."***  
(James 4:13-15 underlining mine)

When we call ourselves a Christian... and continue to live in sin, choosing to ignore God's command for purity and for sexual fulfilment only within the confines of marriage; when we continue to live a worldly lifestyle; when we piously listen to sermons on Sunday but live like the devil during the week; when we neglect to read our Bibles and conveniently remain ignorant of how we should live; or just ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit and live according to our own rules...then we are poor ambassadors for Christ and without a single word being spoken, our lives will bring reproach to the name of Jesus Christ.

My encouragement to each one who reads this letter is to not only receive Jesus Christ as your personal SAVIOUR, the One who can make you righteous in God's eyes, but to also submit to Jesus Christ as your LORD by following Him and obeying His Word.

Let not your life be a stumbling block to others. Do not give others an opportunity to speak badly about Christ. As an ambassador for Christ you are in a privileged position, but it also carries great responsibilities. Christians are to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world:ÂÂÂÂÂ ***And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God***  
(Romans 12:2).

x Libby

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