

CHRIST- OUR LIFE

Ruth Paxson (Written in 1928)

CHRIST Jesus was made like us that we might be made like Him. In the incarnation there was the union of Deity with humanity that in regeneration there might be the union of humanity with Deity. When the Holy Spirit begat in the believer a new nature He opened the door to a living, organic union between Christ and the Christian which will exist through the ages upon ages to come. Christ and the Christian are eternally one. The exalted Christ lives now to bestow upon us in all of its fullness His own triumphant, joyous, holy life.

To be a Christian is nothing less than to have the glorified Christ living in us in actual presence, possession and power. It is to have Him as the Life of our life in such a way and to such a degree that we can say even as Paul said, "For me to live is Christ." (Philippians 1:21) To be a Christian is to grow up into Christ in all things: it is to have that divine seed which was planted in our innermost spirit blossom out into a growing conformity to His perfect life. To be a Christian is to have Christ the life of our minds, our hearts, our wills, so that it is Christ thinking through us, loving through us, willing through us. It is increasingly to have no life but the life of Christ within us filling us with ever increasing measure.

But I can hear some modern Nicodemus say, "How can these things be?" How can I live such a life in my home where I receive no sympathy nor help but rather ridicule and scoffing, and where I have for so long lived a sinful and a defeated life? How can I live a truly consistent Christ-life in my social circle where there is scarcely a person who ever gives Him a thought and where His name is never mentioned? How can I live "in the Spirit" in a place of business where I am surrounded by those living altogether "in the flesh" and where the very atmosphere seems surcharged with evil? How can I even learn to live the life more abundant when my membership is in a thoroughly worldly church where little is given to feed and strengthen my spiritual life?

As we are in Christ in the heavenlies so is He in us on earth. Christ in us can live this life anywhere, and that is what He longs to do. This truth our Lord gave in His last conversation with His disciples on earth. He had told them that He was going away from them and they were wondering how they could ever be true disciples apart from Him. The burden of this last conversation was to assure them He would be with them in a spiritual presence far more real and vital than the relationship they had with Him up to that time. The same life that was in Him as the Vine would flow through them as branches.

John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

It was likewise the burden of our Lord's high priestly prayer on that last night.

John 17:23, 26, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. And I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou has loved me may be in them, and I in them."

"I in them" - these three simple but significant words close the prayer with that little inner circle in which He breathed forth the passionate desire of His heart for His own on down through the centuries. Now as well as then, it is the consuming desire of Jesus Christ to incarnate Himself in the Christian.

The apostle Paul in the revelation given him laid hold upon this precious, glorious truth and it is woven into the warp and woof of his experience, his preaching, and his missionary service. "Christ liveth in me" was the very acme of his personal spiritual life.

Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me."

Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ."

"Christ liveth in me" so that "To me to live is Christ" - there was nothing beyond this for Paul. Having the glorified Christ as his very life was all-inclusive in Paul's spiritual experience. This to him was life on the highest plane.

"Christ in you" was the heart of his message to the churches. It rang out with clarion clearness in all Paul's teaching and preaching. A cross section from any of Paul's epistles would reveal this truth written in capital letters.

Colossians 1:27, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

"Christ in you" was the very passion of his missionary service. Paul might employ different methods in his service for God, he might be all things to all men, but the end, the aim, the goal of it all was just one thing with him - that Christ Jesus Himself might be formed in each one who heard the Gospel message.

Galatians 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

To be a Christian is to accept Christ as Saviour and to crown Him as Lord. But there is one step more: it is to appropriate Him as Life. As the works within the watch are the real life of the watch so the Lord Jesus within the believer is the real life of the believer. "The Christian life is not merely a converted life nor even a consecrated life but it is a Christ-life." Christ is the Christian's center; Christ is the Christian's circumference; Christ is all in between. As Paul has put it "Christ is all and in all."

Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

A PERFECT ONENESS EFFECTED

The spiritual history of a believer could be written in two phrases, "Ye in me" and "I in you." In God's reckoning Christ and the believer have become one in such a way that Christ is both in the heavenlies and upon earth and the believer is both on earth and in the heavenlies. The Church without Christ is a Body without a Head; Christ without the Church is a Head without a Body. The fullness of the Head is for the Body and the Body is "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." (Ephesians 1:23)

Colossians 2:9-10, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the God head bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power."

Ephesians 1:22-23, "And he put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

Could God tell us more clearly that in His divine purpose He means for the fullness of Christ to be the fullness of the Christian? It is a staggering thought! Its plain import is that you and I and all other Christians are to bring Christ down from heaven to earth and to let men see even in us who He is and what He has done and what He can do in a human life. It is to have Christ's life in such a perfection of likeness that men see Him in us and are drawn to Him in faith and love. It is to be such a oneness of life that one's human personality is but a vessel in which the beauty, holiness and glory of the Lord Jesus shine forth in undimmed transparency.