

WHAT I HAVE RECEIVED FROM CHRIST

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Hebrews 13:8.

It is a privilege to speak in the name of Him Who has called us His friends if we do the things He commands us. There are many things about which I am not qualified to speak intelligently and wisely, but I can speak of Christ with joyous freedom because of what He has done for me, and because of what I have received from Him. In these days when people are chasing a thousand and one things, none of which are satisfying, I rejoice in Jesus Christ, Who is ever the same. He is the unchanging object of stable faith. He is our highest and holiest example. He satisfies every demand of life, not only as the object of faith itself, but also as a sufficient inspiration to the demands that faith makes upon life in the heroism of its struggle, in the sacrifices of its service, and in the sufficiency of its reward.

"I've found a Friend, O such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him."

Among the things which I have received from Christ are the following:

I. Pardon.

"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matthew 9:2). Having just returned from a mission of miracle working, Christ was preaching to a crowd of eager listeners, when suddenly there was let down through the roof of the house a man bedridden from a stroke of paralysis. Christ immediately bestowed upon the poor man a far greater blessing than the one which he sought, namely, instant, complete and permanent pardon. The forgiveness of sins is God's greatest gift to man. I do not have words to express my gratitude for the fact that Christ has forgiven me.

"God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Years ago a Russian soldier sat in his tent one night before a list of debts he could not pay. He had written at the bottom of the list, "Who is to pay for all this?" As the hours went by, he finally fell asleep. The Emperor came by, looked in the tent, saw the soldier, came up closer, saw the list of debts and the pitiful question. He affixed his signature to the bottom of the list, so that when the soldier awoke, he found his debts paid. I know that once I faced moral and spiritual debts which I could not pay. But Jesus Christ, with the blood of Calvary, wrote, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Is it any wonder that rainy days become radiant days when the heart can sing?--

"Jesus paid it all;
All to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow."

II. Peace.

What is peace? The fundamental thought in the word is that of harmony with the will of God. No soul can be at peace until it is reconciled

to God. Peace of spirit comes from oneness with God.

This world does not have any peace. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22). Someone has summarized modern life in three words, "Hurry, worry, bury." The world has tried all the opiates and sedatives, but there is only one preventative against fear and worry.

Jesus Christ is the real author and source of peace. He said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). Christ's legacy of peace is the most precious of His gifts, an inheritance which the world can neither give nor take away.

Through Christ I have received peace with God. Therefore, with thanksgiving I make my requests known to God, "and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" garrisons my heart and mind "through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

III. Purpose.

A negro philosopher once said, "One reason why some folks never git nowhar is, they wasn't gwine nowhar when they started." But Christ gives us a purpose, and that purpose is just Himself. As the Mississippi River flows through the middle of America and the tributaries feed into it on both sides, so when one seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all else flows into that central purpose, to know Christ and to make Him known. "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21).

Whether Paul was looking to the past, at the present or to the future, all the strength of his faith, all the fulness of his hope, and all of the longings of his soul were centered in Christ. Inasmuch as Christ had imparted a new nature to Paul, the Apostle was becoming more and more Christ-possessed and Christ-like. Paul loved Christ with all of his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. All of his thoughts were brought into subjection to Christ. All of his interests, plans, activities, and hopes were centered in Him. In thought, word, and deed, Paul sought to reproduce the spirit of Christ. No course of life can possibly compare with the one who can say: "For to me to live is to reproduce Christ, to reflect His spirit, to carry out His purposes and to follow the pattern of His glorious life."

"Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do,
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me."

How grateful I am for the purpose which I have received from Christ!

IV. Power.

Christ also means power, the ability to see the purpose through. He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18).

He is all-powerful. Christ has sufficient power to strengthen us in our weakness, to enlighten us in our ignorance, to cheer us in our gloom, and to give inspiration for our tasks. He will give power to our efforts, quality to our work, breadth to our vision, depth to our consecration, and intensity to our efforts. There is all of the difference in the world in seeking to do the Lord's work in our own strength and in doing it in Christ's power.

Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). That declaration is not an idle boast of a braggart, but rather the triumphant expression of a self-distrustful soul which has found its way to the source of inexhaustible power. Paul had tried Christ under all conditions and circumstances of life, and had found Him equal to every emergency. As long as Christ kept on pouring His power into Paul, the Apostle had adequate strength for every need. Paul realized that a living power was flowing into him and preparing him for whatever he might be called upon to endure. In these days of doubt, disillusionment, dismay, and discouragement, we need to remember that the same power which Paul possessed is available to each of us as believers in Christ. He can meet every need of our souls.

For the power which has been received from Christ each of us should be deeply grateful. His power has been made real to us. Not that we may brag about it but that we may be His witnesses.

V. Plenty.

Spiritual abundance is ours. As Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Corinthians 3:21-23). In his second letter to the Corinthians he spoke of them "as having nothing; and yet possessing all things" (II Corinthians 6:10). That is the Christian paradox. A Christian does not have to get rich for he is rich. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Romans 10:12). Most of us appreciate but do not appropriate what we have in Christ. We carry checks on the bank of Heaven but do not cash them at the window of prayer. We are Bible window-shoppers; we stroll up and down through the show-windows of God's Word, but do not possess what we perceive. Paul wrote, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32), "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). God frequently declines to supply our wants because they are unnecessary or injurious, but He never fails to supply our needs. You will never see a time when our God cannot give you just what you actually need. His supplies are abundant, inexhaustible, and satisfying.

VI. Prospect.

"Where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). Someone has said, with reference to the life to come, that in the Old Testament they were willing to go but wanting to stay, while in the New Testament they were wanting to go but willing to stay. Jesus had made the difference. And what a difference it makes to be with Christ! A mother whose little son had died, told her little daughter, "Your brother has gone to be with Jesus." Later, in conversation with a friend, she spoke of having lost her little boy. The daughter spoke up and said, "But, mother, you said he was with Jesus. How can he be lost if you know where he is?" Truly, the Christian can say with His departed loved ones in Christ:

"Death can hide but not divide;
Thou art but on Christ's other side.
Thou art with Christ and Christ with me;
In Christ united still are we."

Pardon, peace, purpose, power, plenty, and prospect are some of the things which I have received from Christ. All that I need is to be found in Him, Who is the same yesterday, the historic Christ; the same today, the indwelling Christ; and the same tomorrow, the coming Christ.

Christ is my message. Some years ago, two boats were passing each other on the Mississippi, when an old Negro said to a white passenger as he pointed to the other boat, "Look, yonder's the captain!" When asked for an explanation, he said, "Years ago, we were goin' along like this and I fell overboard and the captain rescued me. And since then, I just loves to point him out!" Some years ago, I was overboard but the Captain of our salvation leaped overboard from glory to rescue me. And I just love to point Him out.