

ENRICHED BY CHRIST

"That in everything ye were enriched in Him, in all discourse and all knowledge."
1 Corinthians 1:5.

There are not many people who would deny to the Apostle Paul the title of "Christ-intoxicated." As one reads the story of this dauntless missionary of the gospel of Christ, he cannot fail to be moved by the passion that was in him. He was a man of set purpose -- living, suffering, enduring -- that at all costs he might bear his witness. As you read his letters you feel that in every sentence he is striving to tell something of what Christ means to him. I doubt if anyone could have been in Paul's presence for many minutes without hearing something about the change which had come to him since he had accepted Christ as his Saviour.

The feeling of divine compulsion was behind Paul's missionary enthusiasm. He did not spare himself in the work of the gospel. What endurance he showed! What a list of the things he had suffered! Up and down the known world of his day he journeyed, and with one set purpose -- to win followers to the Way. Difficulty and danger did not daunt him. He was "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Wherever Paul went he left behind a little company of believers whom he could count his children in the faith. Despised, buffeted, and persecuted, he continued steadfast to the end.

It seems that the believers at Corinth had conveyed to Paul the idea that they sacrificed something of the joy and fulness of life by becoming Christians. They were going back in memory to the good times before they knew the Lord. To them life was a very pleasant thing, and the beautiful was considered the good. They lived largely in their emotions, and therefore idolized youth as the time for drinking to the full the cup of happiness.

At the time Paul wrote this letter to them the content of the gospel was becoming a theology. The joyousness of our Lord's teachings was receding as the emphasis upon the austere side of life grew stronger. The Corinthians resented the demand for obedience to a higher standard of life. They feared the insistence upon character as the evidence of creed. They were not as yet emancipated from the old attractions and fascinations, and with it all were given to the infirmity of self-pity. With the tenderness of a father, Paul replies that they have missed the very conception of Christian experience and are losing some of the best things God waits to bestow. He emphasizes that there is no call to sacrifice or suppress anything really worth possessing. The Heavenly Father is not a petty tyrant taking away the pleasures of His children.

On the contrary, our Lord makes life more joyous. He lifts it to a higher plane. He gives a new and higher standard of values. Paul knew that Christ came to enrich life, and so informed the Corinthians. He said, "In everything ye were enriched in Him." And this statement is just as true for us as it was for them. Paul called them back to Christian joy and obedience by reminding them of their poverty apart from Christ. And we need the same reminder. We are so accustomed to the blessings of life that we often forget the Giver. We take most of the facts of life for granted, though their influence upon us is greater than we can measure. Without Him we would be very poor indeed.

We are greatly indebted to Paul for various statements which express the special genius and value of the Christian faith. He unhesitatingly describes the Christian experience as one of enrichment. Life is what Christ offers, rich life, glorious life. There are unhappy people, and you may see some of them almost anywhere. Some may deny even to themselves that they are unhappy, but there are times when they must face the tragic fact. They are conscious of an emptiness which they long to have filled. There are people who are bored with life as they know it. They are bored with most things, and most of all with themselves. There are defeated people, more to be pitied

than scorned; for defeat sits very heavily upon them. They have never been the success they hoped to be, never attained the position they coveted or the applause after which they hankered; and they count themselves as failures. And to these obvious defeats are added many of which the world knows little — the defeats within. There are people who are afraid, afraid of life and afraid of death. Timid, anxious, and dismayed, they live in constant dread.

And to them all Jesus offers life. In everything they can be enriched by Him. They can hand over their unhappiness, their boredom, their defeats, and their fears to Him, and He will deal with them. That is the good news which I delight to proclaim. There is life, enriched life, to be had, and it is not denied to any who will take it upon the terms of the offer. It is victorious life which is offered, a rich gift indeed. And how is it to be obtained? It is the gift of God, but it is not thrust upon unwilling recipients. God does not belittle human dignity nor pauperize us by the manner in which He bestows His bounty.

1. Christ has enriched the world's intellectual life.

The range of human thought is immense, but finite. The grandeur of the world's art and literature evidences the high, capacious powers of man. Christ has touched and refined the world's art and literature. Except the Jewish sacred writings, ancient literature was a mass of mingled glory and shame.

To know Christ and to serve Him is certainly an enriching experience. It makes a tremendous difference in the life. It made a great difference in cultured and intellectual men like Augustine. The record is plain enough that the Christian experience turned that brilliant and wayward youth into a great Christian thinker and saint. If we set ourselves the task of compiling a list of men and women, obscure and distinguished, who have been transformed by the Christian experience, we shall find ourselves exulting as we proceed from century to century. So when I make the assertion that Christ has enriched the world's intellectual life, I have behind me the accumulation of centuries of experience. Even in the realm of science Christ has brought enrichment. He has inspired the search for truth, and some of the greatest scientists have been humble followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Christ has enriched the world's social life.

It is obvious that truths which enrich the world's thought are bound to tell upon its social life. There is always in true and noble thought a living and moving power to leaven character. Wherever the influence of Christ is felt we have a better social order.

Who can measure the influence of Jesus Christ in the social order? Kindness is by no means an exclusively Christian virtue, and yet it has been shown that it flourishes most surely in Christian countries. The whole notion of public service has been wonderfully enlarged through the influence of Jesus Christ.

3. Christ has enriched the world's moral life.

Christ spake with authority. His teachings are not a set of mere precepts and opinions. They are a living rule of life and conduct. His teachings have certainly changed the world's moral life. Think of what they have done toward making human life sacred. Think of what He has done to elevate womanhood. The difference that He has made in the moral life of the world cannot be measured accurately or adequately.

4. Christ has enriched the world's spiritual life.

He emphasized the necessity of the new birth, which experience equips men rightly to live this life and fits them for an eternal home with God. In Him we have a wealth of spirituality which is ever-increasing. It is unaffected by the grave. The gift of Christ to the world is unique because in Him alone have we a true revelation of God and an unconquerable power to live aright.

Christ has touched our lives at so many points that the more we contemplate the difference He has made, intellectually, socially, morally, and spiritually, the more we must say with Paul: "In everything ye were enriched in Him." Although there can be no doubt that Christ has greatly enriched the life of the world, there is an intimate and personal enrichment which He brings, and it is this which Paul has in mind. There is a new life in Christ which is given to all those who will come to Him in full surrender.

If you will be a loyal disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, He will enrich your life, He will purge it of its pollution, He will conquer your lusts, He will enlighten your mind, He will deepen in you all that is generous and rich and brotherly and true and just. He will make your life worth living. He will touch your sufferings and your labors with the glory of His sympathy, and He will deepen your hopes for yourself and for others with the security of an eternal prospect. At last He will purify and perfect and welcome you.

So, Christian friend, I remind you that it is good to be alive, especially if the joy of Jesus rings in your heart. Every day has its charm, and every night has its call to thanksgiving. All of us need that enrichment of life which Jesus alone can bestow. This enrichment through Christ is for our more efficient and effective service.