

CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP TO US

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

When we first come to know Christ Jesus as our Saviour, He is so wonderful as we see Him that we think there can be nothing beyond what we see at that time. But, as we go on studying the Word of God and getting better acquainted with Christ himself, we soon find that what we know of Christ at first, glorious as it is, is a very small part of all that there is to know. We are constantly getting new views of Him and seeing Him in new relations to our own lives. We shall never get to the end of new discoveries, if we study Him, in Whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

I. Christ For Us.

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Here we see Christ for us. We see Christ taking our place, bearing our sins, suffering and paying the penalty for our sins in order that we might go free, and taking our place in order that we might be saved and have a home in heaven. This view of Christ is the fundamental one. Upon this view of Him every other view must rest. We cannot hope to see Christ in any other relation of blessing to us until we have first seen Him clearly in our place, suffering for us, bearing our own sins in His own body on the tree. Here is where many go astray. They try to understand Christ in us before they are clear about Christ for us.

The Bible is full of this idea of Christ for us. We find it in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. One of the clearest and most definite statements about it is in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." We find another amazing statement about it in II Corinthians 5:21, "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." Peter also gives us a very clear and definite statement of this great truth in I Peter 2:24, "Who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." Before His atoning death on the cross took place, our Lord said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

This blessed view of Christ has brought perfect peace to many a guilty conscience. So many have found rest when they came to see Christ for us. Christ bearing their sin in His own body on the cross and consequently their sin put away forever and God's wrath at their sin fully and eternally satisfied, and absolutely nothing between them, sinful as they had been and God perfectly holy. We were redeemed by the blood of Christ. That the blood of Christ made atonement for our sins is the foundation of our faith, the inspiration of our hope, and the ground of our confidence. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). Christ paid the price of our redemption, and that was nothing less than His own precious blood.

During the Civil War a chaplain went among the soldiers in a hospital and preached unto them the way of salvation through Christ. He found one man whose eyes were closed and who was muttering something about blood. The chaplain thought

that he was thinking about the carnage of the battlefield; and, going to him, he tried to divert his mind; but the young man looked up and said, "Oh, doctor, it was not that that I was thinking of; I was thinking how precious the blood of Christ is to me now that I am dying. It covers all my sins."

Have all of us received clearly and fully this view of Christ, Christ for us on the cross? Do we realize that all of our sins were laid upon Him and settled forever? Do we realize that "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7)? Do we realize that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1)? Do we realize that no matter how vile we may have been God does not have anything against us now? Do we realize the full meaning of what we sing?

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

Christ took our place when He hung upon the cross for us, and the moment we accepted Him we stepped into His place of perfect acceptance with God, that He "became sin for us" in order that "we might become the righteousness of God in him."

One day Queen Victoria visited a paper mill and when she saw the filthy rags exclaimed, "How can those be made white?" "Ah, your majesty," was the reply, "I have a powerful chemical process by which I take the color even out of those red rags." Some days after, the Queen found on her writing-desk a lot of the most beautifully polished writing-paper she had ever seen; on each sheet were the letters of her own name and likeness. There was also this accompanying note, "Will the Queen be pleased to accept a specimen of my paper with the assurance that every sheet was made from the dirty rags she saw on the back of the poor rag-picker? Will the Queen allow me to say I have had many a good sermon preached to me in my mill? I can understand how the Lord Jesus can take the poor heathen and the vilest of the vile and make them clean and white. And I can see how He can put His own name upon them; and just as these rags transformed may go into a royal palace and be admired, so poor sinners can be received into the palace of the Great King."

Christ's blood cleanses from all sin—original sin, inherited sin, and willful sin; sins of thought, word, and deed; sins of omission and sins of commission.

"Near, so very near to God
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son,
I am just as near as He.

Dear, so very dear to God,
Dearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son,
I am just as dear as He."

II. Christ In Us.

There is a larger view of Christ than that of Christ for us on the cross. It is built upon this first view. It is inseparable from it and impossible without it. If you try to get this view of Christ in us without first getting a view of Christ for us, you will go astray and your view of Christ will not be accurate and true. You will find this second view of Christ in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The view which we have of Him here is that of Christ in us.

It is good to see Christ for you on the cross, but it is even better to have Christ in you. But, you will never have Christ in you until you have first accepted Christ for you. That is, you will never have Christ as an indwelling presence until you have first accepted Christ as an atoning Saviour. Never forget that. This is a mistake that so many are making. They are trying to get Christ in them while ignoring Christ for them. They are trying to build the superstructure before they have laid the foundation. The attempt to do it has always failed and always will fail. It cannot be done.

When you have accepted Christ for you, then you can go on to get Christ in you. You cannot build the superstructure until you have laid the foundation, but when you have laid the foundation you do not need to stop with it. It is not only our privilege to have Christ for us on the cross, but it is also our privilege to have Christ in us, and to say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

This is a most blessed view of Christ. In point of fact, Christ does dwell in every believer. Paul said, "Know ye not as to your own selves, how that Christ Jesus is in you" (II Corinthians 13:5)? Yes, Christ is in every child of God. It is our privilege to have His conscious indwelling.

A wonderful transformation had been wrought in Paul. His had become a Christ-centered life. He said, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." Those who observed Paul saw Christ in him. Christ within meant refreshment, enjoyment, and abiding strength for the daily life. When Christ lives in a man, He does not destroy his personality, but He uses it and multiplies its worth and usefulness. When Christ laid hold upon Paul, He did not repress or exterminate his learning, energy, and flaming enthusiasm, but He converted them to higher uses and nobler ends. Christ's personality invaded Paul's and took complete possession of it. When Christ lives in us, life takes on a new meaning, and dormant powers are aroused and improved. Christ's presence brightens up the dull, monotonous days and makes life worth living.

III. Christ on Us.

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14). Here we have Christ on us, Christ clothing us with His own likeness, so we are outwardly like Him. This is even a larger view than having Christ in us. It is possible for one to have Christ in him, but so hidden away and hindered that others see very little of Christ on him. Here we see that it is possible to have Christ on us, so that others see Christ when they see us. All of us have known people who lived in such a manner that we thought of Christ when we saw them. Christ was in them and on them.

It is possible to live outwardly, as well as inwardly, a Christlike life. Just as we shall never have Christ in us until we have Christ for us, so we shall never have Christ on us until we first have Christ in us. Christ on us will be the outworking of Christ in us. There are those who are trying to get Christ on them without first getting Christ in them. In other words, they are trying to imitate Christ and become like Him in their own strength. It cannot be done. You will never live a Christlike life until you surrender self and self-efforts, and let Christ live His life in and through you. The great need of our day is for people who have Christ on them and live like Him in all the relations of life. Christ is the Sun, and we are simply mirrors; we catch His rays and reflect them into the world. In the crowded lives that most of us are living, the danger of letting our work for Christ crowd out our communion with Him is very real. If you do that, you will not have much of Christ on you.

IV. Christ With Us.

This view of Christ is even better than the preceding three. "What!" someone will say. "Something better than Christ for us on the cross?" Yes. "Something better than Christ in us as an indwelling Person and presence?" Yes. "Something better than Christ on us so that men can see Him?" Yes, something better yet. We have not gotten to the deepest depths yet. We have not scaled the loftiest heights yet. To those who are doing the Lord's will He speaks in these words, "Lo, I am with you always." It is wonderful that the vivid and supporting consciousness of His presence may be known by the most humble Christian. The paths of life will change, but the partner and the presence will never change. When He is present with us, safety, strength, and satisfaction are sure.

Christ said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). The great and insistent cry of every heart that truly knows and intelligently loves Jesus Christ is found in the last prayer of the Bible. "Even so, come Lord Jesus." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). On that day each child of God will be transformed into the perfect likeness of Christ: "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). Christ for us on the cross, Christ in us as an indwelling and governing presence, Christ on us as the vesture of our daily life, and Christ with us as a living presence transforming us into His own likeness.