

IMPORTANT PREPOSITIONS

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:13.

Since God has made known His mind to us by means of words, it is important that we remember that every word which He has used in giving us this glorious revelation is worthy of our most careful attention. Be the word ever so small which He uses we shall discover it is freighted with the glory of heaven.

Frequently little acts result in accomplishing much. One young man had a desire to learn how to speak in public. He purchased a book of instructions and discovered that the first rule was to learn how to have a pleasant countenance. He was informed that it would be impossible to win an audience by frowning or scowling at the people. After thinking about this, he decided to test it out, so tried to think of the grouchiest man he met from day to day. He believed that the gatekeeper at the railroad station was that man. The next morning as he held out his ticket for inspection he gave the man a smile. He considered that it took a lot of courage to do that, but to his surprise and delight the man responded with a pleasant smile and a cheerful "Good morning." Out of this exchange of smiles sprang a pleasant friendship.

The same rule applies to the little words of the Bible. What might seem insignificant to us will convey wonderful truth in revealing the mind of God.

Words are truly vibrant with power. A word doesn't have to be a big one in order to hurt and harm, and it doesn't have to be a big one to bless and uplift. A preposition is not a very big word; in fact, for the most part it can be spelled with but two letters. A few are a bit longer, but on the whole we think of a preposition as a small word and a very insignificant part of language. Small as it is, it has a vital place in our everyday conversation.

The teacher of language would tell us that a preposition is a word expressing a single idea, used with a noun or a noun-equivalent to show the relation that exists between what is denoted by the noun or noun-equivalent and what is denoted by some other word in the sentence. Prepositions do not show relations between words but between things. The prepositions to which I shall direct your attention in this service link us to the wonderful things of our Lord.

I. Christians Live In Christ.

"In Christ" is one of the key expressions in the Pauline Epistles. The little preposition "in" unlocks the profound mysteries of the Christian life. Oneness "in Christ" is the theme of Ephesians, and completeness "in Christ" is the heart of Colossians. This phrase represents the charmed circle of the grace of God. At this very moment you are either "in Christ" or "out of Christ." There is no middle ground.

In II Corinthians 5:17 we read, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The things revealed in that verse all depend upon whether a person is "in Christ." If "in Christ" then "all things are become new." The same applies to Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The preposition "in" makes all the difference. A study of the word "in" in the various epistles will give a renewed appreciation of the greatness of God's grace.

II. Christians Should Live Near Christ.

Being "in Christ" for salvation, we are to live "near Christ" in our daily experience. Unsaved people are not "near Christ." Sinners are "dead in trespasses and sins." Christ said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8). How true is this of those who have not come to know Him in sincerity and in truth! But the work of Christ has bridged the gulf, and we read "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Never belittle the shed blood of Christ, because it has brought us to the place that the Holy Spirit says we "are made nigh."

It is our daily responsibility to live near to Christ. Too often we are like the prodigal son who left the father's house and went to a far country. This is the place to which the backslider usually goes, hence he is out of touch with God. The Psalmist reminds us that it is "good for me to draw near to God." James wrote, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." All of us need to cultivate an intimacy with Him and recognize the sweetness and fulness of His companionship and fellowship. We need to live near to Him in troublous times like these today. The nearer we are to Christ the more attractive our lives will be and the more people will be compelled to take knowledge that we have been with Jesus. It is a blessed experience to practice the presence of Christ.

III. Christians Should Live By Christ.

If we are honest with ourselves and with others, we must admit that most of us are living largely in our own strength rather than upon the strength of our Saviour and Lord. We are not drawing from Him the grace which we need for every passing hour. No person can live a victorious Christian life in his own strength.

Just as an engine needs fuel and the human body needs food, even so every Christian needs spiritual food. Daily we need a full meal of the Bread of Life. The sooner we learn our inability to live up to the Christian standard by our own strength, the better it will be for us. We need the daily inflowing of divine grace which comes only through the reading of God's Word and prayer. Would that God's people would sense the need of His Word day by day before they start out to meet the responsibilities of any new day! What a difference it would make in their spiritual experience! But most church members are too much occupied with other things to seek the daily nourishment that they must have if they are going to live as God would have them.

IV. Christians Should Live For Christ.

The preposition "for" is very essential if we are to be the kind of Christians God wants us to be. We are not to live for self, but for Christ. "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" (Galatians 2:20). Since Christ has given Himself "for me" and "for you," then we should in turn live for Him. Paul instructed Titus to teach the people "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." They were not to strive to maintain a high social status, but rather were to do the bidding of their Lord, living for Him and giving themselves for His service. Our service is not for personal ends, but for Christ.

The life of unselfish devotion to the interests of the Saviour Who has called us into His service is the life that shines with beauty and that has real blessing for others. Let us remember then that when we are living for self and for selfish ends it is not for Christ. Let us sing from the heart, "I'll live for Him who died for me."

V. Christians Should Live Like Christ.

There is nothing greater than likeness to Christ. In the resurrection we shall be fully

conformed to His image because we shall receive bodies like unto His glorious body. But while we remain here in the flesh there is no reason why we cannot manifest in our lives those glorious characteristics which we see in Christ. Christians are not to display bitterness, envy, malice, hatred or the other evils that spring from a carnal nature.

As you have lived and gone about your duties today, has anyone seen Christ in you? "Be like Jesus, this my song, in the home and in the throng."

Christ knows all about us, for nothing is hidden from His eyes. He knows whether or not we give Him the place He rightly deserves. He knows how much we allow the Holy Spirit to produce in us those beautiful Christlike qualities. He knows everything about us.

Satan knows about us also. The record he keeps of us is accurate. He knows full well whether you and I help or hinder his plans. Before him each life is an open book. If we fail our Lord, Satan delights to accuse us.

Others know about us, too. Not for long can you deceive other people. People may excuse us or even bear with us in our inconsistencies, but they know. Those who are sick at heart, perhaps weary of sin, tired of the shams and ills of life, critical and skeptical, desirous of seeing the real thing, namely, a life that squares with one's profession, cannot be fooled. Others know just how much like Christ you are. You may try to excuse yourself for your lack of Christlikeness, but the world is not going to be deceived. Make up your mind that you are going to be like Christ in your daily living to the end that His name may be magnified among men. Nobody can become too Christlike. The more like Christ we are, the more we please the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Since you are in Christ, then live near Christ, by Him, for Him and like Him.