

The PERSONAL and INTIMATE EXPERIENCE of CHRIST

by Ed Marks

The Gospels portray the incarnate Christ, whereas the Epistles reveal the pneumatic Christ. The pneumatic Christ is the Christ who is the Spirit, the *pneuma* (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17). He is the Christ who indwells the believers to be everything to them in their daily experience. This is clearly seen in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, which is a revelation of how the believers can personally and intimately experience the pneumatic Christ, of how they can take Christ as everything to them in their Christian life for the building up of the Body of Christ. J. N. Darby said, "This epistle gives us the experience of christian life in its highest and most perfect expression—say, rather, its normal condition under the power of the Spirit of God" (455).

Philippians, according to Conybeare and Howson, was written approximately twenty-six years after Paul's dynamic conversion (832-834). After so many years, Paul was not self-contented in his present experience of Christ. Instead, he said, "Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (3:12). *Perfected* here means completed or mature in life. Paul recognized that he had not yet arrived at a state of maturity in his growth in the life of Christ, so he continued to pursue Christ. The Greek word for *pursue*, *dioko*, is the same word for *persecute*. Before Paul's conversion, he persecuted Christ in a negative sense. After his conversion, he "persecuted" Christ in a positive sense to gain Christ and be found in Christ. This is according to what the loving seeker in Song of Songs said: "I held him, and would not let him go" (3:4, KJV). Paul "persecuted" Christ, pursued Christ, by laying hold of Christ. To lay hold of is to grasp, to seize, to take possession of. Christ laid hold of Paul; He grasped, seized, and took possession of Paul so that Paul might grasp, seize, and take possession of Him.

According to 1 Timothy 1:16 Paul, the foremost sinner, is a God-appointed pattern to the believers: "But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern

to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life." We need to pursue Christ in the same way that our pattern Paul did so that Christ can be everything to us in our experience. It is in this way that we can be brought on to maturity (Heb. 6:1). The Lord cannot return again until His overcoming bride has been prepared. In order to be prepared, to be made ready, as Christ's bride, we must go on to maturity. To be mature in Christ is to be filled to the brim with Christ as life, to be full-grown in Christ. Daily we need to grow with the growth of God, with the increase of Christ as life within us (Col. 2:19). It is only by our subjectively experiencing the indwelling Christ for Him to increase within us that the Body of Christ can be built up to prepare us as Christ's bride. May we all be brought into more pursuing of Christ for more growth in Christ, which issues in more of the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:16). For this we should pray to the Lord, like the seeker in Song of Songs: "Draw me, we will run after thee" (1:4, KJV). We should ask the Lord to draw us, so that we with many others will run after Him, pursue Him. He is like an immense magnet in this universe, drawing all His seekers to pursue after Him. His drawing power is our pursuing power for us to experience Him. Philippians shows us the most personal and intimate experience of Christ, which should be the experience of every believer.

Experiencing Christ's Inward Parts

Paul said that he longed after the saints "in the inward parts of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:8). Literally, the Greek word for *inward parts* here is *bowels*, "signifying inward affection, then, tender mercy and sympathy" (Recovery Version, note 1). Christ's inner being, His inward affection, is absolutely focused on His believers, who are the members of His Body, His church. He is the church-loving Christ, the Christ who gave Himself up for the church (Eph. 5:25). All that Christ does in this age is for the building up of His Body to prepare the Body to be His bride. If we are one with Him in His inward parts, His inward affection for the church will be infused into us, and we will become

church-loving believers. We will become believers who love the brothers and lay down their lives on behalf of the brothers (1 John 3:16). We all should pray, "Lord, burden me for Your Body. Infuse me with Your love, with Your tender affection, for the members of Your Body."

Paul was not an individualistic believer. He was Body-conscious and Body-centered because Christ's inward parts, His inward affection, for the Body had become his inward parts. Even though the church which Paul had established in Corinth unrighteously accused him of deceiving them and making a gain of them, he said, "Nay, rather, most gladly will I spend, yea, and myself be spent, for your souls, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (Conybeare 463). Paul was willing to spend his material possessions on the believers and spend his being on them, even though his love was unrequited. This is because he was one with the church-loving Christ in his inward parts. Paul told us in Philippians 2 that his co-worker, Timothy, was like-souled with him, because he genuinely cared for what concerned the believers. To seek the things concerning the church with all the believers is to seek the things of Christ Jesus (vv. 19-21). May we all seek to be one with Christ in His inward parts, His inward affection, toward the church with all the believers.

Taking Christ as Our Living for His Expression

Paul took Christ as his living. "For to me, to live is Christ" (1:21). Christ lived in Paul to be his life, and Paul lived Christ for Christ to be his living. Paul and Christ had one life and one living. Concerning this, Ruth Paxson said:

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, "To me to live is Christ." 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. (218)

Christ was Paul's content, and Christ was also Paul's expression. "Christ will be magnified in my body" (Phil. 1:20).

To be magnified is to be extolled, to be enlarged, to be made great. To Paul's Roman captors, Jesus was insignificant and small, but Paul magnified Christ, making Him great and enlarging Him in the sight of his captors. When people saw Paul, they saw Christ because Christ was his expression. He extolled Christ in his body. In Galatians 6:17 Paul said, "I bear in my body the brands of Jesus."

Brands here literally are "the scars of the wounds made upon the body of a slave by the branding-iron, by which he was marked as belonging to his master" (Conybeare 493). No doubt, the brands of Jesus in Paul's body were the physical scars he bore from his sufferings in his faithful service to his Master, Christ the Lord, showing that he belonged to Christ. Five times Paul received forty stripes less one under the hands of the Jews (2 Cor. 11:24). Three times he was beaten with rods, and once he was stoned (v. 25). The brands of Jesus in Paul's

body also bore an invisible, spiritual significance. These brands were the characteristics of the life that he lived, a life of magnifying Christ in his body. He bore the characteristics of the One whom he lived, the God-man Jesus.

Jesus lived a life of continually rejecting His human life to live by the divine life. Just as Christ lived because of the Father (John 6:57), Paul lived because of Christ (Gal. 2:20). Just as Christ did the Father's will (John 6:38), Paul did Christ's will (Rom. 1:10). Just as Christ carried out the Father's work (John 4:34), Paul carried out Christ's work (2 Cor. 6:1). Just as Christ spoke the Father's word, Paul spoke Christ's word (13:3). Just as Christ sought the Father's glory (John 7:18), Paul sought Christ's glory (1 Cor. 10:31). Just as Christ lived to please the Father (John 8:29), Paul lived to please Christ (2 Cor. 5:9). Just as Christ did not do anything from Himself, taking the Father as His unique source (John 8:28), Paul endeavored to do everything by rejecting and denying himself and taking Christ as his life and source (Gal. 2:20). For Paul, to live was Christ. When Paul lived, that was Christ living. Paul bore the brands, the characteristics of Christ's life. In actuality, Paul was "Jesus living again on the earth in His divinely enriched humanity" (Recovery Version, Acts 28:9, note 1).

Experiencing the Bountiful Supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

Paul lived Christ for His magnification by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). Conybeare and Howson point out that the term *bountiful supply* "literally

applied would mean *the supplying of all needs [of the chorus] by the Choregus*. So the words here mean *the supplying of all needs [of the Christian] by the Spirit*" (727). The choregus was the leader or director of the chorus. He supplied the needs of everyone in the chorus, such as the needs of food, clothing, lodging, and musical instruments. His supply was all-inclusive and bountiful. The indwelling pneumatic Christ is our real Choregus, supplying us inwardly with the true riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). He is supplying us with Himself as the all-inclusive and bountifully rich Spirit of Jesus Christ. Christ as the Spirit with all His riches indwells our spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:22). These riches include all of His wonderful person with the reality of His incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Whatever we need, He is. As the Spirit of reality, the Spirit of truth (John 14:17), He makes all that He is and has accomplished real to us in our experience. We can live Christ for His magnification, for His enlarged expression, by this wonderful Spirit. To live by the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit, to live, move, and have our being by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), is to live Christ for His expression.

Paul said, "I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19). Salvation here to Paul was to be sustained and strengthened by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ to live Christ for His magnification in any environment and circumstance. Although Paul was in prison, his expectation was that in nothing he would be put to shame, that in everything he would magnify Christ. It was a shame to Paul not to magnify Christ. He was confident that his present situation would turn out to his salvation *through the petitions of the saints*. This indicates that the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is the supply of the Body of Christ, and this supply was conveyed to Paul through the prayers of the saints. "Imprisonment did not isolate Paul from the Body of Christ or cut him off from the supply of the Body" (Recovery Version, Phil. 1:19, note 2). All of us can experience the supply of the Body, the bountiful supply of the Spirit, regardless of our limiting circumstances or situations, by the prayers of the saints. May we all say with Paul, "Brothers, pray also for us" (1 Thes. 5:25). How we need our fellow members to pray for us, but many times our uncrucified pride, individualism, and self-reliance come in the way of our depending on Christ not only as the Head but also as the Body for His rich supply. The testimony of Watchman Nee in this regard is quite precious:

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the Spirit of Jesus Christ is the
supply of the Body of Christ. If
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of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we must be
rightly related to all the members of Christ's
Body, learning to rely on their fellowship
and prayers to communicate that
supply to us.

I was engaged at the time in preaching the gospel in a remote part of the country, far removed from other servants of God with anything approaching the knowledge of the Lord that I felt I had. I had been sent there by Him, and there was no doubt of the need or the readiness of people to hear. But something was lacking. My preaching was void of power, and there was very little fruit from it. Yet what God was seeking to give me I seemed unable to receive. I could not get through alone; what I needed above all just then was fellowship.

But where was I to find it? True there was a handful of simple believers, country folk, among whom I had been staying, but I felt they knew so little of the Lord that they certainly could not help *me* in the great problem facing me. They would scarcely even have a sufficient foundation from which to pray intelligently for me in it, and certainly not enough to bring me through. I was forgetting the Body!

At last I reached an impasse. There was nothing left but to call them in, if I was not to give up and go out altogether. So at my request those simple brethren came to me in my need. I told them what I could of my difficulty, and they prayed—and as they prayed, light dawned! The thing did not *need* explaining. It was done, and done in such a way that it has never needed to be repeated. From that day on the tide of blessing flowed.

Yes, God will bring us often to places where we cannot get through alone. For the life that asserts that "God and I are enough" is only in fact hindering Him. The Lord taught me that day how those members of the Body which seem to be more feeble are indeed to Him most precious. (*What Shall This Man Do?* 101-102)

If we want to experience the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we must be rightly related to all the members of Christ's Body, learning to rely on their fellowship and prayers to communicate that supply to us. We also must be those who serve the Body, who minister the bountiful supply of the Spirit to our fellow members for the building up of the Body.

This is depicted in Exodus 30 with the type of the compound ointment. This ointment typifies the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus Christ with His bountiful supply (see "The Compound Spirit" in *A & C*, Vol. II. No. 1, pp. 15-27). Exodus tells us that the entire tabernacle with all its furniture and the serving priests were anointed with this

ointment (30:26-30). Today's tabernacle, today's house of God (1 Tim. 3:15), is the church as the Body of Christ, and this Body is built up by a holy priesthood, a serving body of priests (1 Pet. 2:5). This shows that the compound ointment, the compound Spirit, is for the Body of Christ and for God's priestly service. We must be burdened for the Body and rightly related to all the members of the Body in order to experience the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We must also be involved in the priestly service that builds up the Body to enjoy this bountiful supply in full. Even though Paul was in prison, he experienced the rich supply of Christ because he was in the Body and in God's priestly service. It is by this rich supply that we live and magnify Christ.

Because Paul enjoyed the bountiful supply of the Spirit, he became a channel of this supply to others. Although he had the desire to depart and be with Christ (that is, to be with Christ to a far greater degree), he said, "But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith" (Phil. 1:24-25). This shows that it made a difference to the saints whether Paul lived or died. Our continuing in this life on earth should also make a difference by our being for the saints' progress and joy. Progress refers to the growth in life and joy to the enjoyment of Christ. When we minister Christ as the rich supply to others, this furthers their growth in life and deepens their enjoyment of Christ. Is our Christian life characterized by daily progress and joy? Are we strong factors of others' progress and joy? If we are not, our lives on this earth tragically do not make a difference as far as the Body of Christ is concerned. It should matter to the church whether we live or die. We need to pray that we would daily grow in life and continually enjoy Christ by being filled with the bountiful supply of the Spirit, and then we need to be channels of this supply to others for their growth in life and enjoyment of Christ. It is in this way that we become building members of the Body of Christ, members who are one with Christ in His great career to build His church (Matt. 16:18).

Taking the Mind of Christ as Our Mind

Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." This is the dispensing of Christ's mind into our mind. What a wonder that we can actually have the mind of Christ! (1 Cor. 2:16). In Romans 12:2 Paul says that we need to be transformed by the renewing

of our mind. In Ephesians 4:23 Paul charges us, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Our spirit mingled with the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17) needs to spread into our mind to become the spirit of our mind. This comes from setting our mind on the spirit (Rom. 8:6).

Practically speaking, the way to set our mind on the spirit so that we can be renewed in the spirit of our mind is to set our mind on God's Word. We need to be renewed in our religion, logic, and philosophy with the revelations from God's holy Word by the Spirit of reality. The light of the divine concepts, thoughts, and logic from God's Word needs to shine into the darkened understanding of our natural mind, to transform our fallen mind into the mind of Christ.

The mind of Christ is the mind of One who "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave," the mind of One who "humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). The more we allow the light of the Scriptures to penetrate our mind, the more the thinking of Christ as the Slave-Savior will be our thinking. We will be one with Him in our thinking to be a slave of God.

It is significant that Paul opened his Epistle to the Philippians by saying, "Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus" (1:1). Instead of thinking how we can be served by others in the church, we should always think of ways we can serve others, "for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). Just as Christ girded Himself with a slave's apron to wash the feet of His disciples (John 13:4-7), we need to gird ourselves with Christ as our humility toward one another (1 Pet. 5:5). We need to be one with Him in His obedience even unto the death of the cross. When our mind is renewed with Christ's mind, we surely will not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3); instead, we will consider others more excellent than ourselves (Phil. 2:13). We should esteem ourselves and others in a sober-minded way according to the measure and level of Christ's life element which has been imparted into us. This is to have the mind of Christ for the Body of Christ.

Experiencing the Pneumatic Christ as the Inner Operating God to Hold Him Forth as the Word of Life

Paul charges us in Philippians 2:12-13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who

operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” These verses describe our cooperation with the pneumatic Christ as the inner-operating God to work out our own salvation. Salvation here is not eternal salvation from the lake of fire; it is the same salvation spoken of in Philippians 1:19, a daily, moment-by-moment salvation of being sustained and strengthened to live Christ for His magnification. In 1:19 salvation is by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, whereas salvation here is by the inner operating God. This shows that the inner operating God is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Actually, our salvation is this wonderful person Himself experienced by us, enjoyed by us, and lived out from us. He operates in us both the inner willing and the outer working for His good pleasure. Christ lives in our spirit and dispenses Himself from our spirit into our mind, emotion, and will. His will then becomes our will. Our working, our acting, then becomes His acting to carry out His will which He has worked into our will. It is in this way that our working becomes God’s working for His good pleasure.

This working is for us to hold forth the word of life, for us to shine as luminaries in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation (2:15-16). To hold forth Christ as the word of life is to apply, present, and offer Him to others by living Him out. A graphic example of this is seen in Acts 5, which describes the Sanhedrin’s arrest of the apostles and the Lord’s rescue. During the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison and led them out, saying, “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life” (v. 20). Notice the words *this life*. Note 2 on this verse in the Recovery Version says that *this life* is

the divine life preached, ministered, and lived by Peter that overcame the Jewish leaders’ persecution, threatening, and imprisonment. This word indicates that Peter’s life and work made the divine life so real and present in his situation that even the angel saw it and pointed it out.

May our life and work be the same! When we live and magnify Christ, we will hold Him forth as the word of life, making Him as the divine life so real and present in our situation that those around us take note.

We need to allow Christ as the light of life to shine forth from within us that others may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in the heavens (Matt. 5:16).

Our good works are the deeds of our working out, living out, the indwelling, shining Christ. We must remember that only God is good (Mark 10:18). Our natural goodness, our natural good works, are empty and vain. We must be one with Him as the inner operating God to live Him out. Then He Himself will be our goodness, and our good works will be the works of God, the only One who is good. We must hold forth Christ as the

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word of life in our living and in our speaking. We must speak the words of this life, this Christ, whom we are daily experiencing, so that others can be brought into the experience of Christ as life.

Experiencing Christ to Become a Drink Offering

Paul experienced Christ to such an extent that he became a drink offering poured out upon the sacrifice and service of the believers’ faith (Phil. 2:17). The drink offering in the Old Testament (Num. 28:7) is a supplementary offering in addition to the basic offerings revealed in Leviticus 1—6. Paul enjoyed and was filled to overflowing with Christ as the heavenly, new wine to become wine to God for God’s satisfaction. To be poured out as a drink offering is to be poured out in martyrdom for the advancement of God’s kingdom. In 2 Timothy 4:6 Paul said, “For I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand.”

Actually, the Christian life is a martyr’s life, a life of continually dying to self and living to Christ who died and resurrected for us. “For the love of Christ constrains us...that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised” (2 Cor. 5:14-15). We should pray, “Lord, constrain me with Your dying love that I may no longer live to myself. I want to live by You and to You day by day for Your glory, Your expression.” The Lord told His disciples, “You shall be My witnesses” (Acts 1:8). The word for *witnesses* is literally “martyrs.” A martyr is one who continually exercises to reject the self and live by another life, the life which is Christ Himself. By this kind of exercise, we are filled with Christ as our heavenly wine so that we can become a drink offering poured out to God for His good pleasure.

Only those who live a martyr’s life can die a martyr’s death. The experience of Polycarp, a martyr in the church’s early history, is evidence of this. His persecutors told him that they would set him free if he would only say that he did not recognize Jesus of Nazareth.

But he replied, "I cannot deny Him. I have been serving Him for eighty-six years, and in these eighty-six years He has never treated me wrongly. How can I deny Him for the love of my body!" As a result, they carried him to the fire and burned him. While the lower half of his body was withering in the flames, he still could say, "Thank God that I have the opportunity today to be burned by men and to give my life to testify for You." (Nee, *Orthodoxy* 25)

Gaining Christ and Being Found in Him

Paul said:

But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ. But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ and be found in Him. (Phil. 3:7-9)

Our eyes need to be opened, as Paul's were, to see the all-surpassing preciousness and priceless worth of the Christ who lives in us. All the things which had been gains to Paul in the religious world of Judaism he counted as loss on account of Christ. Even more, he counted all things to be loss, suffered the loss of all things, and counted them as refuse that he might gain Christ. Refuse is dregs, filth, rubbish, dung. We should be one with Paul to count all things as refuse that we may gain the Christ whom we have received. To gain Christ is to win Christ. Our Christian life should be a quest to win Christ daily. Christ Himself is our prize, our exceeding great reward, both in this age and in the age which is to come. Paul wanted not only to gain Christ, to have Christ dispensed and added to his inward being day by day, but also wanted to be found in Christ by all who would see him. Note 1 on Philippians 3:9 in the Recovery Version expresses in a marvelous way what it means for the believer to be found in Christ:

Paul had been altogether in the Jewish religion under the law and had always been found by others in the law. But at his conversion he was transferred from the law and his former religion into Christ and became "a man in Christ" (2 Cor. 12:2). Now he expected to be found in Christ by all who observed him—the Jews, the angels, and the demons. This indicates that he aspired to have his whole being immersed in and saturated with Christ that all who observed him might find him fully in Christ. Only when we are found in Christ will Christ be expressed and magnified. (Phil. 1:20)

Taking Christ as Our Lived-out Righteousness

When we received Christ as our Savior and life, we were justified by God and Christ became our righteousness (Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30). Now that Christ is our indwelling righteousness, He wants us to live by Him so that He can become our lived-out righteousness. "Not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith" (Phil. 3:9). Our righteousness is as filthy, polluted rags (Isa. 64:6); it is only the righteousness which is Christ Himself that is acceptable to God. The overcomers who live out Christ as their righteousness in this age will become His wife at His marriage dinner, and they will be "clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). The righteousnesses (plural) of the overcoming saints are their righteous acts in their experience of taking Christ as their subjective righteousness. These righteousnesses become the fine linen to clothe them for Christ's pure expression. The Lord counsels the lukewarm believers in Laodicea to buy from Him white garments that they may be clothed and that the shame of their nakedness may not be manifested (3:18). White garments signify conduct that can be approved, or justified, by the Lord. This conduct is Christ Himself lived out of us to be our subjective righteousness. We need to pay the price to gain Christ in this way in our daily life. Paul's aspiration to be saved from the shame of not living and magnifying Christ was to be saved from the shame of nakedness, the shame of not being clothed with Christ as his robe of lived-out righteousness.

Endeavoring to Know Christ Subjectively and Experientially

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ in Philippians 3:8 is the knowledge that comes from the revelation of Christ in His peerless worth. Paul's aspiration to know Christ in verse 10 is the experiential knowing of Christ which is based upon our vision of Him. We first need a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Christ (Eph. 1:17-18). Then the Christ whom we see will become the Christ whom we know in our experience. We need to know Christ as the all-inclusive, bountifully rich Spirit typified by the bountifully rich good land of Canaan in the Old Testament. Colossians 1:12 says that Christ is the allotted portion of the saints, just as the

good land was the allotted portion of the Old Testament saints (Josh. 14:1). Colossians 2:6 tells us, who have received Christ, to walk in Christ, just as the Old Testament saints were charged to walk in the good land. In Deuteronomy 11:24 the Lord promised them, "Every place on which the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours." The places where they walked in the land were the places that became theirs. To walk in Christ as the reality of the good land is to live, move, and have our being in Christ to possess Christ.

In order to possess Christ by walking in Him, we first need to see Him. In Genesis 13 the Lord told Abram to lift up his eyes and look on the good land which he was to possess. Then the Lord said, "All the land which you see, I will give it to you....Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you" (vv. 15, 17). The land which Abram would see was the land which God would give him. After seeing the land, Abram was to walk in the land which he saw. There is a spiritual principle set forth here in Abram's experience. The Christ we see is the Christ whom God will give us. In the spiritual realm, the Christ we see is the Christ we get. Then we walk in the Christ whom we see for our experience. If we see only that Christ is our Savior, that will be the extent of our experience of Him. But if we see the all-extensive, unsearchably rich Christ, our experience will deepen accordingly. First, we gain the excellency of the knowledge of Christ by revelation. Then we know Him experientially according to that revelation. We live, move, and have our being in the Christ whom we see. We need to pray daily for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Christ so that we can experience Him more and more.

Taking Christ as Our Goal

Philippians 3:13 and 14 reveal how Paul took Christ as his goal: "Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward." Paul was laid hold of by Christ to lay hold of Christ in his experience (v. 12). Since he had not yet fully possessed Christ, he did one thing. This one thing is critical for our spiritual progress in the Christian life. We must continually exercise first to forget the things which are behind. The things of the past can prevent us from experiencing the present

Christ. He is not the "I was"—He is the "I am" (John 8:58). The Christ whom we experience is the verb "to be" in the present tense. He is the Christ now, the self-existing, ever-existing One to be our all. Our past sins, mistakes, shortcomings, and wrongdoings must surely be confessed in the light of the Lord's presence. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Once our sins are confessed, we are forgiven and cleansed by God. Not only so, His promise in the new covenant is that He shall by no means remember our sins anymore (Heb. 8:12). Now we must exercise to forget our failures, which are behind us, and press on to enjoy the Christ of the present.

We must not linger in our past experiences of Christ, which can frustrate us from experiencing Him in the present. We must stretch forward day by day to gain more of the vast unexplored territory of the Christ before us. We must pursue toward our goal—the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ.

Furthermore, we must not linger in our past experiences of Christ, which can frustrate us from experiencing Him in the present. We must stretch forward day by day to gain more of the vast unexplored territory of the Christ before us. We must pursue toward our goal in the Christian life—the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ. If we overcome by daily enjoying and gaining Him to the fullest, we will enjoy Him as our prize in the next age. This prize is the uttermost enjoyment of Christ given to the victorious runners of the Christian race. God has called us upward to gain Christ as our prize by taking Him and Him alone as our goal. We must ask the Lord to give us a pure heart, a heart with only one aim, one goal, one pursuit, one desire—the person of Christ Himself.

Maintaining Our Joy

Many expositors rightly say that Philippians is a book of joy and rejoicing. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (4:4). How glorious is the expression of Christ in Paul! From the dark background of his imprisonment is the radiant shining forth of Christ from Paul in his rejoicing in the Lord. "Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name" (Heb. 13:15). To praise and rejoice in prison and to encourage others to do the same is surely the "sacrifice of praise." The nature of praise is an offering, a sacrifice. An offering indicates the element of loss. God wants us to praise Him in the midst of our loss, not only in the midst of our gain. David said that he exercised to praise God seven times a day (Psa. 119:164). We must exercise our spirits to praise the Lord and rejoice in a daily way. Watchman Nee says the following about the importance of praising:

We should not only pray to God but also learn all the more to praise God. We need to see the significance of praise at the very beginning of our Christian walk. We must praise God unceasingly. David received grace from God to praise seven times a day. It is a good exercise, a very good lesson, and a very good spiritual practice to praise God every day. We should learn to praise God when we get up early in the morning. We should learn to praise Him when we encounter problems, when we are at a meeting, or when we are alone. We should praise God at least seven times a day. Do not let David beat us in his praise. If we have not learned how to praise God every day, it is hard to have the kind of sacrifice of praise spoken of in Hebrews 13. (*Messages* 249)

Watchman Nee was arrested in 1952 in communist China. He was falsely condemned and sentenced to prison where he died in martyrdom on May 30, 1972. On April 22, 1972 he wrote a letter to his sister-in-law, in which he said, "I maintain my joy, so please do not worry. I hope you will also take care of yourself and be filled with joy in your heart" (Lee, *Watchman Nee* 182). May the Lord have mercy on us that we would learn how to maintain our joy in our Christian life and exhort others to be filled with the joy of the Lord the way Watchman Nee did according to Paul's pattern. Concerning the experience of Christ as our unfading, eternal joy, A. B. Simpson wrote the following precious stanza in a hymn:

I have come to the Fountain of Joy;
His joy is the strength of my heart.
My delight is unmixed with alloy,
My sunshine can never depart.
The fig tree may wither and die,
Earth's pleasures and prospects decline;
But my fountains can never be dry —
My portion, my joy is divine. (*Hymns* 479)

Experiencing Christ as Our Virtues

Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brothers, what things are true, what things are dignified, what things are righteous, what things are pure, what things are lovely, what things are well spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things." The virtues listed here are the human virtues of Christ expressing the attributes of God, which are embodied in Christ. Christ is true, dignified, righteous, pure, lovely, and well spoken of; He is the reality of these praiseworthy virtues. When we pursue Him to experience Him as our content, He will become

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the reality of our virtues. This will cause us to become a letter of Christ, and others will be able to read and know Christ in our being (2 Cor. 3:3).

Learning Christ as Our Secret

Paul enjoyed Christ as his secret of sufficiency no matter what his circumstances were.

Not that I speak according to lack, for I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content. I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack. (Phil. 4:11-12)

We must learn to be content in any circumstance, whether one of abounding or of lacking. Christ Himself is the secret of contentment which we must learn. We must learn how to gain Christ, experience Christ, enjoy Christ, live Christ, and magnify Christ in any environment and in any matter. Paul said, "I have learned the secret."

The way to appropriate Christ as our secret of contentment in everything is seen in Philippians 4:6-7:

In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses every man's understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

We need to let our requests be made known to God in everything. The word *to* in the phrase *to God* "denotes motion toward, in the sense of a living union and communion, implying fellowship. Hence, the sense of *to God* here is *in the fellowship with God*" (Recovery Version, Phil. 4:6, note 4). Making our requests known to God is our letting Him know, our telling Him, in fellowship with Him. Telling the Lord, talking to the Lord, is the way to enjoy Christ as our secret of sufficiency. When we make our requests known toward God by speaking to Him, this is our motion toward Him. When we move toward Him in this way, He moves into us as the peace of God. If we have some problem, we just need to tell Him. When we speak to Him, He infuses Himself into us as peace, and what is expressed through us outwardly is Christ. If we practice speaking to the Lord constantly, keeping ourselves in the fellowship with Him, spontaneously we will live Christ and enjoy Christ as our secret.

Taking Christ as Our Power

Paul desired to be found by others in Christ, and he also testified, "I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me" (Phil. 4:13). The converse of this is also true: "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). We may feel that we can do many things apart from Christ, but in God's eyes whatever we do apart from Christ is nothing. It has no worth, no value. In God's eyes nothing counts but Christ. Paul was able to live and magnify Christ in any environment in the One who empowered him. We may think that certain things in the New Testament are impossible to fulfill, but we need to remember that we can do all things in Christ by taking Him as our power, our inward dynamo. "As the dynamo within us, He empowers us to live Him, to magnify Him, and to press on toward Him as the goal" (Lee, *Philippians* 8). The surpassing greatness of God's power, which is Christ as the power of God (1 Cor. 1:24), is toward us who believe. Christ is our indwelling resurrecting power, ascending power, subjecting power, and heading-up power. Christ as the power of God dwells in our spirit. When we walk according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4), we can do all things in the empowering Christ.

Taking Christ as Our Expectation

If Christ is everything to us in our day-by-day experience, we will surely expect Him to come again for our glorification. "For our commonwealth exists in the heavens, from which also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself" (Phil. 3:20-21). Do we eagerly await our Lord's coming again? When the magi from the east told Herod of His first coming, Herod "was troubled and all Jerusalem with him" (Matt. 2:3). It is understandable that Herod was troubled, but it seems strange that all Jerusalem was troubled with him. When they heard this news, they should have rejoiced, because the Jews at that time should have been expecting the Messiah to come. Their being troubled shows that they were not genuinely seeking the Savior. We need to beware of falling into such a degraded inward state. The evil slave says in his heart

that his master delays his coming (Matt. 24:48). The ones who love Christ's appearing will be rewarded with Him as the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8). Those who watch for His coming will receive Him as the morning star (Rev. 2:28) before His open appearing as the sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2).

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Christ is in us today as our hope of glory (Col. 1:27). We do have the hope that He will transfigure our mortal body of humiliation, which is full of sin, sickness, death, weakness, and corruption, conforming it to the body of His glory. In the day of His manifestation, we will be like Him in our entire being—spirit, soul, and body (1 John 3:2). We need to take the returning Christ as our expectation and hope of glory. As we are expecting and hastening His coming (2 Pet. 3:12), may the Lord continually draw us to pursue Him for the personal and intimate experience of Him revealed in the book of Philippians. **AF**

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