

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRIST IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

by Ed Marks

The first sentence uttered by Paul to the Lord Jesus when the Lord appeared to him on his way to Damascus was a question: "Who are You, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). I would say that Paul's entire life from this moment of his miraculous conversion became a mystical quest to answer this question. His life was a quest to know Christ and to win Christ. According to Conybeare and Howson, Paul's Epistle to the Philippians was written about twenty-six years after his conversion (832-834). This Epistle shows that after such a long time as a believer, Paul was the antithesis of a complacent or self-contented man. In this Epistle we hear him uttering his heart's desire and longing: "to know Him" and "that I may win Christ" (3:10, 8, lit.). Indeed, Paul counted everything other than Christ as refuse, dregs, filth, rubbish, dung, that he might gain Christ. His quest was to know Christ in the most intimate and personal way and to win Christ as his prize. Just before his martyrdom he was able to declare, "I know Him," whom I have believed (2 Tim. 1:12).

As one who had been strictly trained at the feet of the eminent Pharisee, Gamaliel, Paul was instructed in the knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 22:3; 26:5). Once he was converted to Christ, Paul received a spirit of revelation to see that the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, the three sections of the entire Old Testament, are an explanation of Christ and that He is their center and content (Luke 24:44). To the apostle Paul Christ was everything. Paul said in Colossians 1:17 that all things cohere in Christ. In other words, Christ is the holding center, the hub, of the entire universe. He has the first place both in the old creation and in the new, and He is the reality of every positive thing in the universe (vv. 15-18). This means that He is the all-inclusive One. Since Paul is the God-appointed pattern of the New Testament believers (1 Tim. 1:16), his quest to know this all-inclusive Christ should also be our quest. T. Austin-Sparks said,

The centrality and supremacy of Christ is the key and the pivot to all the Scriptures....When you are studying the person and the life and the work of the Lord Jesus, there

must be a Divine quest in your heart, and that quest must be for those features which suggest universality. (8-9)

In the revelation presented to us by Paul, the all-inclusive Christ is not only the One in whom God's heart's desire is centered but also the all-inclusive solution to every problem in the fallen universe. Among all of Paul's Epistles 1 Corinthians is unique in its unveiling of the all-inclusive Christ. Corinth was a church full of serious problems. To be called a "Corinthian" in ancient times was, and still is, deprecating.

Nevertheless, the mostly licentious and iniquitous Corinthians had been transferred out of Adam into Christ and out of darkness into light to become "the church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2). Paul addressed them as such according to the spiritual, divine view of what they, as believers in Christ, were according to their very essence, which was Christ in them. But, of course, they were still infants in Christ, who were fleshy and soulish, not spiritual (3:1; 2:14). Paul's burden in writing them from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8) was to motivate them to aspire to the growth in life that they might become spiritual men. Such men are not dominated by the passions of the flesh or the power of the soul. Instead, they are dominated, governed, directed, and moved by their human spirit indwelt by the divine Spirit, so that they may know the things of Christ, the riches of Christ, which have been graciously given to them by God (2:11-12). Because the Corinthians were still in an infantile state without much transformation, they still carried with them, to a great extent, the problems of the flesh and the soul which characterized their life as unbelievers. Thus we see from reading Paul's first Epistle to them that the church there was riddled with serious problems, such as division, immorality, lawsuits among the believers, problems in marriage life, problems with spiritual authority, problems with the Lord's supper, problems with abusing spiritual gifts, and heretical teaching denying the truth of resurrection. Many expositors point out that this Epistle was written to deal with these problems, but what we want to stress here is

the way in which Paul dealt with them. Paul ministered to them a unique solution, and this solution is a wonderful Person—the all-inclusive Christ. Paul’s ministering of such a Christ was not one of mere objective doctrine. What is unveiled in 1 Corinthians is that the enjoyment of Christ solves the problems in the church through the work of the cross (Lee, *Excelling Gift* 8-13). The word *enjoy* means “to receive pleasure or satisfaction from” (*American Heritage* 457). God’s intention is to be man’s pleasure and satisfaction. He put man in a garden named *Pleasure* (Heb. *Eden*, Gen. 2:15), and He makes us to drink of the river of His *pleasures* (Heb. *Edens*, Psa. 36:8). In the new testament age, He was incarnated to be grace to man. Grace came through Jesus Christ, who was full of grace, and of His fullness we receive grace upon grace (John 1:14, 16-17). Grace is “that which bestows or occasions pleasure, delight” (Vine 169-170). Thus, the Epistles tell us that the Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17), the Lord is with our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22), the Spirit witnesses with our spirit (Rom. 8:16), and grace is with our spirit (Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; Philem. 25). Thus, Christ the Lord as the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29b) indwells our human spirit for our enjoyment of Him. Grace is God in Christ as the Spirit for our enjoyment, pleasure, satisfaction. It is this enjoyment that solves all the problems in the church. We must add that this enjoyment of Christ includes the work of the cross.

By “the cross” I mean the death of Christ, especially the subjective aspect of His death. The Christ that we enjoy today is the all-inclusive One, and included in His being is the killing death. As long as we enjoy Him, we get killed, not in a negative way but in a positive way. When we enjoy Him every day, we get killed every day. One brother may be very offended by another brother and may even be full of hatred, but when this brother enjoys Christ, his germs of hatred toward the other brother are unconsciously killed. In marriage life, the husbands offend the wives and the wives offend the husbands, but when the husbands and wives love the Lord and enjoy the Lord day after day, their bad feeling toward each other disappears. It is cleared up by the killing element within the very Christ that they experienced. Inside of them there is a great change from hatred to love because of their enjoyment of Christ. Because there were so many problems among the Corinthians, Paul wrote to them concerning the enjoyment of Christ. This enjoyment solves our problems by killing the germs within us. (Lee, *Excelling Gift* 11)

The Christ whom Paul determined to know and preach was the crucified Christ (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2).

Christ crucified—weak, despised, and rejected—was a stumbling block to the miracle-seeking religious Jews and foolishness to the wisdom-seeking philosophical Greeks, yet this Christ was just the One they both needed to solve all their problems dealt with in this book. (Recovery Version, 1 Cor. 1:23, note 1)

In 1 Corinthians Paul unveils at least twenty aspects of the all-inclusive Christ for the believers’ enjoyment as the solution to all their problems through the work of the cross (Recovery Version, 1 Cor. 1:9, note 2).

Christ-Our God-given Portion

“To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2). Please notice the phrase *theirs and ours*. *Ours* refers to Paul and the saints in Corinth. *Theirs* refers to all the other believers in every place. Christ is their portion and our portion. He is “the allotted portion of the saints” (Col. 1:12). Just as the children of Israel were each allotted a portion of the good land of Canaan for their possession, each regenerated believer in Christ is allotted a portion of the all-inclusive Christ for his possession and enjoyment. According to Colossians 1:12 we have been qualified by our Father God to enjoy Christ as our portion “in the light.” We must be in the light to enjoy Christ as our God-given portion. Light is the presence of God. The Bible tells us that God is light (1 John 1:5), Christ is light (John 8:12), the life of Christ is light (John 1:4), the Word is light (Psa. 119:105), the believers are light (Matt. 5:14; Eph. 5:8), and that the local church is the lampstand to shine with light (Rev. 1:20). In order to enjoy Christ as our portion, we must contact God in Christ as life through the holy Word. We must also fellowship with the believers, who are the constituents of the church. In this way we keep ourselves in the presence of God, the light, to enjoy Christ as our God-given portion. The faithful God has called us “into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). The word *fellowship* (Gk. *koinonia*) here means joint participation or partaking. We have been called into participating in and partaking of Christ as our God-given portion.

In verse 2 of chapter one Paul spoke of Christ as the portion of the called saints along with “those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place.” We have been called by God to enjoy and partake of Christ as our portion by calling upon His name in every place. This is the way for us to enter into the fellowship of God’s Son. Calling upon the Lord’s name was a meaningful and habitual practice of the early Christians and an integral part of Paul’s teaching. Before his conversion the unregenerate Saul of Tarsus had authority from the chief priests to bind all those who called upon the name of Jesus. This indicates that “in the early days calling upon the Lord’s name was a sign of the Lord’s followers (1 Cor. 1:2). This calling must have been audible, so that others could hear; thus it became a sign” (Recovery Version, Acts 9:14, note 1). When Stephen was being martyred, he called upon the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” (Acts 7:59), leaving an indelible impression on the zealous Saul, who was “standing

by and approving and keeping the garments of those who did away with him" (22:20; 7:58). It is significant that when Paul was baptized, Ananias charged him to call on the Lord's name (22:16). He began his Christian life by calling upon the name of the One he had previously abhorred. By calling on the Lord's name, Saul became one with those whom he had once sought to arrest. In his Epistles he told us, "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him; for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:12-13). He also said that we should flee youthful lusts and pursue Christ as righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22). Paul entered into the simple secret of enjoying Christ as our God-given portion by calling upon the name of the Lord, and he encouraged his young co-worker Timothy to do the same that Timothy might enjoy the Lord as he did. To call out audibly, "Lord Jesus," is the practice of simplicity in Christ. Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 12:3 that no one can say, "Lord Jesus," except in the Holy Spirit. When we call upon the name of Jesus, we get the person of that name and enjoy His cherishing presence as our portion.

Christ-God's Power

Paul revealed in 1 Corinthians 1:24 that to us, the called ones, Christ is the power of God. *Power* in the Greek is *dynamis*, from which we get the word *dynamite*. This is the power, the divine dynamite of God, which operated in Christ to raise Him from the dead, seat Him at God's right hand in the heavenlies, subject all things under His feet, and give Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body (Eph. 1:19-23). Christ Himself is this resurrecting power, ascending power, subjecting power, and heading up power "toward us who believe" (v. 19) and "to the church" (v. 22). *Toward* and *to* imply a transmission. This fourfold power "has been installed into us once for all and is being transmitted into us continually, causing us to enjoy Christ richly and to have the proper church life as His Body, His fullness" (Recovery Version, Eph. 1:22, note 3). We need to "switch on" the indwelling, powerful Christ through our prayer. Specifically, we should pray as the apostle prayed in Ephesians 3. We should bow our knees to the Father that He would grant us, according to the riches of His glory and through His Spirit, to be strengthened with *power* into the inner man so that Christ can make His home in our hearts through faith (vv. 14-17). Our inner man is our regenerated spirit indwelt by the Spirit of God. This mingled spirit is a spirit of faith. Prayer is the best way

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to exercise our spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13), our spirit of believing ability; in this way the surpassingly great power is transmitted to us *who believe*. We need to pray to be strengthened with the surpassingly great, fourfold power of God into our inner man, so that the indwelling, powerful

Christ can spread out from our spirit into all the rooms of our heart—our mind, emotion, will, and conscience.

We think of *power* in a natural way according to our natural concept.

We may want to be outwardly mighty like Samson. We may want to perform miracles for display to be men of renown. But this is not the divine view of power in the new testament age. Christ as the power of God is mainly for His growth in us which is for our growth in life, and our growth in life is the building up of the Body of Christ (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16). In the new testament age we are powerful in our inner man when we are weak in our natural being. Paul said, "When I am weak, then I am powerful" (2 Cor. 12:10). Christ as the power of God is also for our ministry of life so that He can be powerful in life in the ones receiving our ministry (2 Cor. 13:3). American scientists are able to send a man to the moon, but who can transform a man in his mind, emotion, and will? Thank the Lord, His life has power to change a man, not outwardly but inwardly and metabolically. May we all seek to know Christ as the indwelling power of life that we may be daily saved in His life to grow in life and to minister life for His magnification and glory.

Christ-God's Wisdom: Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption

Christ is also God's wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24), and Paul spoke "God's wisdom in a mystery, the wisdom which has been hidden, which God predestined before the ages for our glory" (2:7). A. T. Pierson felt that *wisdom* was the key word to unlocking the revelation of 1 Corinthians:

Corinth was the rival of Athens. The Greeks were proud of their language and literature, learning and logic ("speech" and "wisdom"). Paul prepares these Epistles to meet the Greek mind. He begins by renouncing wisdom, as to the Romans he renounced power. He magnifies "the things of God," "words of God," "demonstration of the Spirit," etc., and would not use wisdom of words lest the Cross be made of none effect. (109)

How can human wisdom compare with the wisdom of God? Indeed, "has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish?" (1:20). Also, "the foolishness of God is wiser than

men” (1:25). When Paul reread God’s sacred teaching in the Old Testament concerning wisdom, he surely received a revelation from God that Christ Himself, the person, is the incomparable wisdom of God. When the Lord established Solomon’s kingdom, He appeared to Solomon and said,

“Ask what I shall give you” (2 Chron. 1:7). Solomon’s response was marvelous: “Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can rule this great people of Thine?”

(v. 10). Solomon asked God for wisdom and knowledge in contacting the people of God for God’s administration and kingdom. We also need to pray such a prayer in the light of the New Testament revelation and reality. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:2-3 that Christ is the mystery of God and that in Him are hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” We need to open up our entire being in prayer to receive the wonderful Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, for our contacting people to dispense Christ into them for their growth in life. Paul said that he taught and admonished every man in all wisdom in order to present every man full-grown in Christ (Col. 1:28). He showed Timothy how to conduct himself in the house of God with Christ as his wisdom in his contacting the saints of different ages: “Do not upbraid an elderly man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, elderly women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim. 5:1-2). *In all purity* is a precious phrase that should govern all of our contact with God’s children. This means we should have only one pure motive: to minister Christ to people that they might grow in the Lord. We need Christ as our wisdom to contact people of all ages, statuses, and situations, in order to dispense Christ into them to present them full-grown in Christ.

Solomon’s book of Proverbs focuses on wisdom, and in certain portions of this book, the wisdom of God is personified (7:4; 9:1; 3:19; 8:12-31):

This personification of God’s wisdom is the second of the Trinity, the Son of God. Christ is the personified wisdom of God....Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth; He established the heavens by understanding (3:19). This One by whom Jehovah founded the earth and established the heavens is Christ, who is the wisdom of God. (Lee, *Life-study of Proverbs* 10)

Proverbs 3:18 says that wisdom is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. “Wisdom as here personified, corresponds to the Word, or Logos, in John” (Pierson, *Key Words* 46). Christ is the reality of the tree of life in the

Gospel of John. John says that in Him was life (1:4), He came that we may have life (10:10), and He is the life (14:6)—the bread of life (6:35) and the water of life (4:10, 14). The one who follows Him has the light of life (8:12). When we lay hold of Christ as wisdom, He becomes the reality of the tree of life to us. Since Christ Himself is the wisdom of God, we should not take the precepts from the book of Proverbs to build up our old, natural man. If we do this, we relegate Proverbs to the genre of the sayings

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of Confucius. Instead, “we need to come to Proverbs as a new man by exercising our spirit with the Spirit to contact the word. Then the word in Proverbs will become spirit and life to us, not to cultivate our natural man but to cultivate our regenerated man” (Lee, *Life-study of Proverbs* 43).

There is a deeper aspect of Christ as wisdom which Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 1:30: “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” Christ is wisdom to us from God in three aspects: righteousness for our past, sanctification for our present, and redemption for our future. Romans 8:10 says that our spirit is life because of righteousness. Christ’s death on the cross paid and thus cancelled the debt for all of our sins. Thus, we were justified by Christ through His death, all of our sins were forgiven by God, and Christ became our righteousness. Because of Christ being our righteousness for our justification, He can impart His life into our spirit to make our spirit life (Rom. 5:18). Now that our spirit is life, we need something further. In our present daily life for our Christian life and church life, we need Christ as our sanctification. Our spirit is life, but our soul needs to be sanctified, to be made holy. To be holy is to be unique and distinct from everything else in the universe, which is common. Only God is holy, but Ephesians 1:4 tells us that before the foundation of the world He chose us to be holy. How can the holy God make us fallen creatures holy? To be made holy is not merely to be separated unto God positionally but also to be saturated with God’s holy nature dispositionally. Second Peter 1:4 says that we believers in Christ have become partakers of the divine nature. We have God’s life in our spirit, and this life includes His holy nature, which needs to spread into and saturate all the parts of our soul—our mind, emotion, and will. Eventually, Christ will become the redemption to our body at His return. “We ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). We have the foretaste of the Spirit in our spirit today, but we look forward to the day when our mortal body will be saturated with the Spirit of life at the Lord’s

coming for our full redemption, which will be our full sonship.

By this we can see that Christ being wisdom to us is for our entire tripartite being and for our entire existence in time: our spirit, soul, and body involving our past, present, and future. First, He dispenses Himself into our spirit, to make our spirit life because of His being our righteousness. Then He dispenses Himself into our soul to be our sanctification, which is a lifelong process. Finally at His second coming, our body will be glorified, and He will be our redemption for the redemption of our body. This is the wonderful Christ being wisdom to us from God. The word *to* implies a transmission and a dispensing. Christ being wisdom to us from God is actually the dispensing of Himself as the embodiment of the Triune God (Col. 2:9) with all of His unsearchable riches (Eph. 3:8) into our tripartite being so that He as the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church according to the eternal purpose of God (vv. 10-11). It is by this dispensing of Christ as wisdom into our tripartite being that the church becomes the masterpiece of God (2:10). This masterpiece is for the display of Christ as the multifarious wisdom of God to the entire universe. The Greek word for masterpiece is *poiema*, which may also be translated as “poem” or “workmanship.” A *poiema* is any work of art that expresses its maker’s wisdom and design. The church is God’s poem, His masterpiece, for the expression of His infinite wisdom and divine design (Heb. 11:10). The church becomes the Triune God’s masterpiece by the dispensing of Christ as wisdom into us, the church’s constituents, to make the church the wise exhibition of all the unsearchable riches of Christ.

A parallel passage to 1 Corinthians 1:30 is Ephesians 5:25-27. This portion of the Word unveils Christ in three stages to dispense Himself into the three parts of our being for His full expression through the church. Verse 25 says that Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. This was in the past for Christ to die for our sins and become our righteousness so that our spirit could become life. Verse 26 tells us why Christ died for the church. It was so that He might sanctify her through cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word. This is for the sanctification of our soul through the metabolic cleansing of the water in the word to add God’s holy nature to our inward parts. Verse 27 then tells us the goal of Christ’s sanctifying the church in the present. It is so that, in the future, He can present the church to Himself as His glorious, holy, and unblemished bride. We will become glorious when our body

is redeemed. The incarnated Christ died for us in the past so that He could become our righteousness. The pneumatic Christ, the Christ who is the Spirit, sanctifies us in the present to be our sanctification. The coming Christ, the Christ who is the Bridegroom, will glorify us in the future to be our redemption for our body.

Christ-The Lord of Glory

In 1 Corinthians 2:7 and 8 Paul said that if the rulers of this age had known God’s wisdom, “they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Ephesians 1:17 speaks of the Father of glory, 1 Corinthians 2:8 says that Christ, the Son, is the Lord of glory, and 1 Peter 4:14 mentions the Spirit of glory. This shows that God in His entire Divine Trinity is, as Acts 7:2 says, the God of glory. What is glory? Glory is God expressed. When a carnation seed falls into the ground, dies, resurrects, and blossoms, it has passed through a process of glorification. Its blossom, the carnation-expression, is its glory. Christ is the Lord of glory for our glorification (Rom. 8:30). He wants to be expressed in and through us, His chosen and redeemed people. Isaiah tells us that God created us for His glory (43:7). Through regeneration Christ is now in our spirit as the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Today we are passing through the process of transformation in our soul from one degree of glory to another degree of glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Eventually, Christ will

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transfigure our body, conforming it to His glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Regeneration takes place in an instant, glorification also in “the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52), but transformation is a long process through which we believers must pass. We must be transformed from glory to glory to bear the Lord’s image for His expression. For this we need to know Christ as the Lord of glory, the indwelling hope of glory, and the transforming Spirit of glory. He is the Captain of our salvation to lead us into glory (Heb. 2:10) for His eternal and consummate expression where “God’s glory in humanity shines forth in splendor radiantly” (Lee, *Dispensing* 14).

Christ-The Depths of God

Now we come to one of the most profound descriptions of Christ in the New Testament. Paul speaks of Christ as the depths, the deep things, of God: “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man’s heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9). Then he continues by saying, “But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God” (v. 10).

The depths of God include all the things of Christ, the things which are unrecognizable to the natural senses of our body and the psychological senses of our soul. The things of Christ are undetectable in the physical and psychological worlds. These things of Christ, which Paul terms *the unsearchable riches of Christ* (Eph. 3:8), are the things which the human eye has not seen, which the human ear has not heard, and which the human heart has not envisioned, experienced, or realized. The only way Christ as the deep things of God can be revealed to us is through the Spirit. This is why we should daily beseech our Father God to grant us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Christ, so that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened to see Him (Eph. 1:17-18). Such a prayer activates the Spirit in our spirit to research the deep things of God and reveal them to us in our spirit for our experience. The Recovery Version of the New Testament has an excellent note on the word *searches* in reference to the Spirit's searching all things, even the depths of God:

The Greek word is used in reference to active research, implying accurate knowledge gained not by discovering but by exploring. The Spirit of God explores the depths of God concerning Christ and shows them to us in our spirit for our realization and participation. (1 Cor. 2:10, note 2)

The key to enjoying Christ as the depths of God is the divine Spirit indwelling our human spirit. After speaking of Christ as the depths of God in verse 10, Paul continues by pointing the Corinthians to their human spirit and the indwelling divine Spirit, who actively researches and explores the deep things of God and then reveals them to us:

For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God. But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God. (vv. 11-12)

In order to know Christ in a full way, we have to know Him as the unique God-man in both His humanity and His divinity. Our human spirit has the capacity to know the things of man, and the divine Spirit has the capacity to know the things of God. Paul said in Romans 8:16, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God." Then in 1 Corinthians 6:17 he said, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." At the time of our regeneration, the divine Spirit came into our human spirit, and these two spirits were mingled together to be one mingled

spirit. If we are to know the unsearchably rich Christ in His many aspects as the deep things of God, we must be spiritual men, those who live, move, and have their being according to the mingled spirit (Rom. 8:4).

Paul shows us that the divine Spirit indwelling our human spirit is the key to enjoying Christ as the depths of God. He also shows us the way to enjoy Him. The unique way is to love Him. At the end of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he said, "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed!" (16:22). If we choose not to love the Lord, we have been set apart to woe and misery. The antithesis of this is what takes place when we love the Lord. Indeed, we cannot even fathom how much "God has prepared for those who love Him....even the depths of God" (2:9-10). The following note from the Recovery Version is a masterful presentation of our need to love the Lord to enjoy Him in the deepest way under His full blessing:

To realize and participate in the deep and hidden things God has ordained and prepared for us requires us not only to believe in Him but also to love Him. To fear God, to worship God, and to believe in God (that is, to receive

God) are all inadequate; to love Him is the indispensable requirement. To love God means to set our entire being—spirit, soul, and body, with the heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)—absolutely on

Him, that is, to let our entire being be occupied by Him and lost in Him, so that He becomes everything to us and we are one with Him practically in our daily life. In this way we have the closest and most intimate fellowship with God, and we are able to enter into His heart and apprehend all its secrets (Psa. 73:25; 25:14). Thus, we not only realize but also experience, enjoy, and fully participate in these deep and hidden things of God. (1 Cor. 2:9, note 3)

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HAS THE CAPACITY TO KNOW THE THINGS OF GOD.**

Christ—The Unique Foundation of God's Building

Paul told the Corinthians that he was a wise master builder who had laid Christ as the unique foundation of the church: "For another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). The Christ, the Son of the living God, is the foundation upon which the Lord Jesus builds His church (Matt. 16:16-18). God's goal is the built-up church, and Paul directed the Corinthians to this goal. All of our pursuit of Christ, our experience of Christ, our enjoyment of Christ, and our ministry of Christ is for God's building. Christ's being the foundation implies that He must be the source and element of all our service for the church. Since He is the foundation

of God's building, He must also be the material of God's building. We should not build the church with the wood, grass, and stubble of things other than Christ Himself, things which originate from the sources of our natural man, our flesh, or the world. This kind of work will be consumed by fire. Instead, we must build the church with gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Cor. 3:12). This means that we must build the church with Christ, the One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily (Col. 2:9). In and with Christ are the divine nature of God the Father (gold), the redeeming work of the Son (silver), and the transforming work of the Spirit (precious stones). This is Christ as the deep things of God enjoyed and gained by us and then ministered by us to others for God's goal—the building up of the church. Only Christ as the foundation stone and building material of the church can stand the test of fire, the fire of the Lord's judgment (Mal. 3:2; 4:1; 2 Thes. 1:7b-8; Heb. 6:8).

Christ-Our Passover

Paul unveiled that Christ is the believers' Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). John the Baptist received a wonderful revelation from God when he declared concerning Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). John saw that Jesus was the reality of the Passover lamb in Exodus 12. When God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt and the tyranny of Pharaoh, He instructed each household to kill a lamb. They were to take the blood of that lamb and apply it to their doorposts and the upper frame of their houses. God passed through the land of Egypt to execute His judgment of death, but He promised the households of Israel, "When I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (v. 13). Christ, the real Passover Lamb, was sacrificed on the cross to take away the sin of the world. His precious blood applied to us saves us from God's condemnation and judgment upon the fallen world. The blood of Christ is the payment for our debt of sin. Through the blood of Christ, the righteous requirement of God has been satisfied for our judicial redemption. Thus, when God sees the precious blood of Christ, He passes over us.

But we need to realize that our redemption through the blood of Christ is the procedure of God's salvation, not the goal. The goal is that we have the life of Christ. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross for our redemption. This was so that we could "have eternal life" (John 3:16). The children of Israel had to apply the blood of the lamb to their houses. They also were instructed to eat

the lamb within their houses while God was executing His judgment on Egypt. God told them to eat in a particular manner: "with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the Lord's Passover" (Exo. 12:11). This shows that their eating was for moving. The lamb which they ate would energize, strengthen, and supply them to move out of Egypt. To eat Christ as the Lamb of God is for us to receive Him into us not only to be our very life but also our life supply. Christ then becomes the life power within us to divinely energize us to move out of Satan's world, signified by Egypt, and out from under Satan's usurpation, signified by Pharaoh's enslaving.

Christ-Our Unleavened Bread

First Corinthians 5:8 says, "Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The feast which Paul speaks of here is the Feast of Unleavened Bread as the continuation of the Passover. This feast lasted for seven days, a period of completion, signifying the full course of our Christian life (Exo. 12:15-20). Throughout our entire Christian life we should enjoy Christ by feasting on Him as the real unleavened bread. Leaven had to be removed from the houses of the children of Israel, and they were forbidden to eat anything leavened during the seven days of this feast. The leaven of malice and evil must be removed from our Christian homes. We should partake only of Christ, the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, who is our absolutely pure and genuine life supply. He must be a continual feast, a continual banquet, to supply us in a rich way for our spiritual nourishment and enjoyment.

Christ-Our Spiritual Food, Spiritual Drink, and Spiritual Rock

In speaking of the type of Israel, Paul said that they "all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ" (10:3-4). The spiritual food of Israel in the wilderness was the manna which fell from heaven. The Lord Jesus declared in John 6 that He is the reality of this manna: "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

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This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever" (vv. 48-51). Christ is the spiritual food of the believers, and we need to daily eat of Him.

The Lord told us, "As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (v. 57). The unique way for us to live by Christ is for us to eat Christ. How can we eat Him? He told His disciples, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (v. 63). In His resurrection Christ as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), the Spirit who gives life (2 Cor. 3:6, 17). We need to receive the Spirit as our food through the Lord's words which He speaks to us. His words are the embodiment of the life-giving Spirit for our spiritual supply. "Thy words were found and I ate them, / And Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). The way to eat Christ as our spiritual food is to eat His words, and the practical way to eat His words is to take the apostle Paul's exhortation to receive the Lord's word "by means of all prayer...praying at every time in spirit" (Eph. 6:17-18). In other words, we need to pray-read the word by exercising our spirit. We read God's word with prayer and we pray with God's word. Then His words are spirit and life to us. We must learn to turn what we read in the Bible into prayer through the exercise of our spirit, so that Christ can become our spiritual food for our assimilation. We live because of what we eat, so we live Christ because we eat Christ.

George Whitefield, the renowned evangelist in the eighteenth century, was a very good pattern of one who enjoyed Christ day by day as his spiritual food by pray-reading God's word. The following excerpt from his journal attests to this:

My mind now being opened and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed, and drink indeed, to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power from above. (I got more true knowledge from reading the Book of God in one month, than I could have ever acquired from all the writings of men.) (60)

A century later, George Müller, upon reading Whitefield's journals, was deeply impressed that Whitefield's "unparalleled success in evangelistic labours was plainly traceable to two causes and could not be separated from them as direct effects; namely, his *unusual prayerfulness, and his habit of reading the Bible on his knees*" (Pierson, *George Müller* 138). As a result, Müller also picked up the daily habit of prayerfully reading the Bible. Both he and Whitefield made the Bible their divine prayer book and made the words of

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the Bible the dialect of their prayer, by turning God's own words into prayer (140). We hope that everyone who ministers God's word would employ such a practice. It is only by being fed ourselves with Christ as our spiritual food that we can be enabled to feed others. This is why Paul told Timothy that a good minister of Christ Jesus is one who is being nourished with the words of the faith. "To minister Christ to others requires that first we ourselves be nourished with the words of life concerning Christ" (Recovery Version, 1 Tim. 4:6, note 2).

Christ is also our spiritual drink. The Lord Jesus said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life" (John 4:14). God the Father is the fountain, the source, of life (Psa. 36:9); God the Son is the spring, the manifestation, of life (John 1:4); God the Spirit is the river, the application, of life flowing out for us to drink. We "were all given to drink one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). God in Christ as the Spirit is our spiritual drink, and our drinking issues in His springing up within us "into eternal life." The word *into* speaks of destination. The destination of the flowing Triune God, of whom we drink, is eternal life, the totality of which is the New Jerusalem. The Bible ends with two destinations for every created man: the lake of fire or the city of water. The New Jerusalem is the city of the river of water of life, the city of the flowing God, the God who is the liquid of life to His believers (Rev. 22:1).

Our spiritual drink flows out of Christ as the spiritual rock (Exo. 17:6). In the wilderness God commanded Moses to strike the rock with his rod so that the rock would gush out water for the children of Israel to drink. This rock typifies Christ who was smitten on the cross by the authority of God's law (the rod of Moses) and judged by God in our stead. Christ, the One who knew no sin, became sin on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21). Out of the smitten Christ flows the Spirit of life for our spiritual drink. John 19 records that while Christ was hanging on the cross, a Roman soldier pierced His side and out flowed blood and water (v. 34).

The blood signifies the redeeming aspect of Christ's death, the cleansing blood of Christ, to save us from the guilt of sin. The water signifies the generating aspect of Christ's death, the flowing life of Christ, to

save us from the power of sin. He purchased the church with His precious blood in His earthly ministry (Acts 20:28). He builds up the church by sanctifying her through His flowing life in His heavenly ministry (Eph. 5:26). He is the Rock of Ages to all His believers to supply them with

His cleansing blood and His flowing life: "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, / Let me hide myself in Thee; / Let the water and the blood, / From Thy riven side which flowed, / Be of sin the double cure, / Save me from its guilt and power" (*Hymns* 980). The water and the blood which flowed from Christ's side as the spiritual Rock of Ages signify a marvelous "double cure." His blood cures our sickness of sin's guilt and condemnation. His flowing life cures our sickness of sin's power and domination. Praise the Lord that we have Him as our spiritual rock who continuously flows out His cleansing blood and His supplying life to be our "double cure."

**CHRIST HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED.
HE IS NOW IN RESURRECTION AS THE SPIRITUAL
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FOR OUR CHRISTIAN JOURNEY.
WE NEED ONLY TO SPEAK TO HIM, AND HE WILL
FILL US WITH HIMSELF AS THE LIVING WATER.**

After Moses had struck the rock, he did not need to strike it again for it to give forth water. Instead, God told him, "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock" (Num. 20:8). This is applicable to us today. Christ has been crucified, smitten on the cross, once for all. He is now in resurrection as the spiritual cleft rock, full of the heavenly and bountiful life-supply for our Christian journey. We need only to speak to Him, and He will fill us with Himself as the living water.

One of the best ways to enjoy the divine dispensing of the water of life into our being is for us to talk to the Lord. Watchman Nee gave an excellent message entitled "Tell Him," in which he exhorts us to learn to talk to the Lord continually:

We should realize that when we have a thorough talk with the Lord and pour out our heart to Him, our intimacy with the Lord is one step further, and we know Him a little more. Intimate contact with Him at these times is hundreds of times better than our ordinary fellowship with Him. By these contacts we advance in life. We should bring our problems to the Lord and tell Him about them. He can comfort us and help us. If a person has never shed tears before the Lord, if he has never shared his joy or sorrow with the Lord, and if he has never talked with the Lord about his private matters, he has never had any intimate fellowship with the Lord; he has never had any deep acquaintance with Him. (329)

When we speak to Christ as the spiritual rock in such an intimate way, we enjoy the divine dispensing of Himself as the living water into our being. It is in this way that we drink of Him as the Spirit, our spiritual drink.

Christ-The Head of Every Man

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul told the Corinthians that "Christ is the head of every man." Christ is not only the Head of the Body but also the Head over all of us individually, directly, and personally. He is Head over all things to the church, which is His Body (Eph. 1:22-23). He is also the Head of each member of His Body. Individually, we need to give Him the preeminence in all things related to us. In our family life, daily life, and church life we must give Him the first place. Practically this means that we should seek His counsel in everything.

Joshua 9 gives a record of how the Israelites were deceived by the Gibeonites because they did not honor the Lord's headship. Joshua was instructed by the Lord to possess the good land and destroy its inhabitants. Among these inhabitants were the Gibeonites, who were Hivites and mighty men. When the Gibeonites heard of Israel's victories at Ai and Jericho, they worked craftily to deceive Israel and escape destruction. The most telling verse in this account is verse 14, which informs us that the men of Israel "did not ask for the counsel of the Lord." As a result, they were deceived by the Gibeonites and made a covenant with them, which the Lord had strictly commanded them not to do (Exo. 34:11-17). This should be a lesson to us believers in the New Testament. We should never take the management of our personal affairs or the church's affairs into our own hands without consulting the Lord. This offends the Lord's headship over us. When we act without consulting the Lord, we are trusting in ourselves not in the Lord, and we do not have His presence. When we honor His headship by seeking His counsel in all things, we have His presence. When we have God's presence, we have wisdom, insight, foresight, and the inner knowledge and discernment of all situations. Because the men of Israel did not seek the counsel of the Lord with the Gibeonites, they were deprived of a victory in the unmixed possession of the good land, the land of blessing. We must always honor the Lord's headship by seeking counsel of Him as our Husband. This is to give Him the preeminence. This will ensure our victory over the enemy, and the land of blessing, typifying the all-inclusive Christ, will be ours.

A. W. Tozer lamented the situation of Christianity at large, when he said:

Jesus Christ has today almost no authority at all among the groups that call themselves by His name....The idea

that the Man Christ Jesus has absolute and final authority over the whole church and over all its members in every detail of their lives is simply not now accepted as true by the rank and file of evangelical Christians....For the true Christian the one supreme test for the present soundness and ultimate worth of everything religious must be the place our Lord occupies in it....Is Jesus Christ Lord in this act? Whether our works prove to be wood, hay and stubble or gold and silver and precious stones in that great day will depend upon the right answer to that question. (8, 14)

**IN GIVING CHRIST THE PREEMINENCE
IN ALL THINGS, WE MUST TAKE HEED NEVER
TO USURP THE POSITION OF THE LORD
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ARE WE THE LORD TO PARTICULARLY
DIRECT PEOPLE IN THEIR PERSONAL AFFAIRS?**

Tozer goes on to exhort us to “go down in meek humility and confess that we have grieved the Lord in failing to give Him the place His Father has given Him as Head and Lord of the church” (15). May we all pray “that He alone in everything and in every respect might occupy the chief place [stand first and be preeminent]” (Col. 1:18b, The Amplified Bible).

In addition to giving Christ the preeminence in all things, all of us must take heed never to usurp the position of the Lord as the Head over each of His members. We do not have the right to tell people what to do or where to go. Are we the Lord to particularly direct people in their personal affairs? Surely we need to fellowship with others concerning the clear teaching of the Bible and open up our inner feeling to them in the Lord’s presence, but we should always direct them to seek the Lord personally and contact Him as their Head directly. The Lord Himself as the Head within them in accord with the clear speaking from His holy Word must be the deciding factor in what they do. It was with the realization of Christ as the personal Lord and Head of each believer that Peter charged his fellow elders not to lord it over the believers but to become patterns of the flock (1 Pet. 5:3). The elders in the church should take the lead by being patterns of pursuing and living out Christ. Among the believers only Christ is the Lord, and all of us are slaves (Matt. 25:24-28; 2 Cor. 4:5). We should be in fear of ever usurping His headship among His children.

Christ-The Body

A great and particular revelation given to the apostle Paul is the revelation of the Body of Christ. It is he alone among the writers of the New Testament who speaks of the Body of Christ. Paul’s conversion experience recorded in Acts 9 was the inception of this revelation. Verses 3 through 5 say,

As he went, he drew near to Damascus, and suddenly a

light from heaven flashed around him. And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.

We must notice a particular and marvelous thing in these verses. The resurrected and ascended Lord asked Saul, “Why are you persecuting Me?” Saul was persecuting the disciples of the Lord, but in the Lord’s eyes they

were “Me.” They were He. He was persecuting the disciples of the Lord, but the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you persecute.” Who is Jesus here? Jesus is equated with His disciples. Who are His disciples? His disciples are His very members, the members of Christ. The following note on the word *Me* in Acts 9:4 in the Recovery Version is exceptional:

A corporate “Me,” comprising Jesus the Lord and all His believers. Saul did not have this revelation. He thought that he was persecuting Stephen and other Jesus-followers, who were in the Way, which he considered heresy (24:14). He did not know that when he persecuted these he persecuted Jesus, for they were one with Him by being united to Him through their faith in Him. He considered that he was persecuting people on earth, never thinking that he touched anyone in heaven. To his great surprise a voice from heaven told him that He was the One whom he was persecuting and that His name was Jesus. To him this was a unique revelation in the universe! By this he began to see that the Lord Jesus and His believers are one great person—the wonderful “Me.” This must have impressed and affected him for his future ministry concerning Christ and the church as the great mystery of God (Eph. 5:32) and laid a solid foundation for his unique ministry.

Jesus was an individual person in the Gospels, but He declared that when the temple of His physical body was destroyed, He would raise it up in three days (John 2:19-22). In resurrection, His physical body became His mystical Body, the Body of Christ. Through resurrection Christ was enlarged. He is not only the Head but also the universal Body with many members. He is now a corporate person. To persecute the members of Christ’s Body is to persecute Him. Just as the members of a person’s physical body are that person, so the members of Christ’s Body are Christ. Thus, Paul declares, “For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body being many, are one body, so also is the Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). Just as our physical body is one body composed of many members, so also the Christ is

one Body composed of many members. Just as the members of our physical body are many yet still one body, so also the Christ is the many members yet still one Body. This is the corporate Christ. Mary McDonough says that this is the "Composite Christ": "Here we have an organic unity, of which Christ, in His personality, is the head (see Eph. 4:15), and all those who are joined to Him in Spirit and share His Life, are members" (81).

All of the believers in Christ are organically united with Christ, having His life (1 John 5:12) and possessing His nature (2 Pet. 1:4), to become His members who compose His organic Body (Eph. 5:30). Christ is both the Head and the Body of what Paul calls "the new man." In this new man Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10-11). He is all the members of the new man and in all the members. Of course, the headship is Christ's alone and is incommunicable. But He has become us in the sense that we have His life and nature to be the very members of His Body.

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul was trying to help the Corinthians see the revelation of the Body of Christ. The Corinthians were self-centered, but the apostle Paul was Body-centered and everything he did was with a Body-consciousness. He spoke of the indispensability of each member of the Body of Christ. All the members have their particular indispensable function for the Body's building up. This enlightened realization eliminates the members' comparing themselves with other members and wishing they could be like another member. "If all were one member, where would the body be?" (1 Cor. 12:19). This also eliminates the haughty thought that we have no need for certain members. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary" (vv. 21-22). It is marvelous that "God has blended the body together" (v. 24). The Greek word for *blended* may also mean tempered, mutually adjusted, mingled, or harmonized. Blending implies the losing of distinctions. In our fellowship together as members of the Body of Christ and in our functioning together for the Body's building up, Christ is fully manifested and expressed in a corporate way. All of the members are then mutually adjusted and harmonized into one organism. In this way all that is seen is Christ and not the expression of anyone's particular personality or peculiar disposition. The church is then the corporate manifestation of God in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:15-16).

We must realize that God's goal is the built-up church as the Body of Christ. This must also be our goal. All that we experience of Christ and all that we do to minister Christ are for the building up of His Body. This built-up Body will become Christ's bride and this bride will be His wife, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2).

Christ-The Firstfruits, the Second Man, and the Last Adam

First Corinthians 15 is a chapter on the truth of the resurrection of the dead. In this chapter Christ is revealed as the One who is the first in order among all those who are resurrected from the dead (v. 20). He is the Firstborn from the dead to be the Head of the Body (Col. 1:18) and as such, He has the preeminence, the first place, in the church, God's new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Christ is also the second man. In God's eyes there are only two men in this universe: Adam, the first man, and Christ, the second man. "The first man is out of the earth, earthy; the second man is out of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47). Adam is a corporate man, including all his descendants,

and Christ is a corporate man, including all His believers. We have been transferred out of Adam into Christ through His death and resurrection. This transfer was actuated when we believed and were baptized into Christ

(Rom. 6:3). When we were in Adam we inherited three terrible things: sin, death, and condemnation (Rom. 5:12, 14, 16-17, 19). Now that we are in Christ we have been gifted with three wonderful things: righteousness, life, and justification (5:17-18, 21). Christ is our righteousness for our justification before God, and He indwells us as our life. What a marvelous fact that we are no longer in Adam; we are in Christ! God has moved us out of Adam into Christ. We are no longer a part of the first man. We are a part of the second man, Christ.

In God's eyes Christ is also the last Adam. This means that Christ is the ending, the conclusion, the termination, of Adam. The first Adam was the beginning of mankind; Christ as the last Adam is the end of mankind. In God's eyes when Christ was dying on the cross, He was the last Adam. Christ is the ending of the Adamic race. After Christ there is no more Adam. Adam is over; he has been crucified. This is why Paul said, "Our old man has been crucified with Him" (Rom. 6:6a)," and, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20a). Through incarnation Christ became the last Adam for the termination of the old Adamic creation through His death.

THE INCARNATED CHRIST DIED FOR US IN THE PAST
SO THAT HE COULD BECOME OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.
THE PNEUMATIC CHRIST SANCTIFIES US IN THE
PRESENT TO BE OUR SANCTIFICATION.
THE COMING CHRIST WILL GLORIFY US IN THE
FUTURE TO BE OUR REDEMPTION FOR OUR BODY.

Christ-The Life-giving Spirit

John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh, and 1 Corinthians 15:45 says that the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. These are the two great “becomings” of Christ in His move to carry out His eternal economy. First, as the very God, the eternal Logos, He became flesh. As the Word become flesh, He was the last Adam. As the last Adam, He died on the cross to terminate the old creation and accomplish a judicial redemption for us. In resurrection, this last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. The first Adam became a living soul in creation (Gen. 2:7). This shows that the human soul is the center and life-pulse of the old creation. The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit in resurrection. This shows that the life-giving Spirit is the center and life-pulse of the new creation. Because we are a new creation in Christ, we should not live by our self, our soul, any longer. Instead, we should deny our self and live, walk, move, and have our being by the vivifying Spirit as the center of the new creation (Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4).

It is in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit that Christ carries out His organic salvation in us. Without Christ being the life-giving Spirit, there is no way for us to experience His organic salvation. Through His death on the cross as the last Adam, we have been reconciled to God. In His resurrection as the life-giving Spirit, we are saved in His life. “For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled” (Rom. 5:10). It is as the life-giving Spirit that Christ gives life to our spirit and indwells our spirit in our regeneration (2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:22). It is as the life-giving Spirit that Christ sanctifies us so that we can be made holy as He is (2 Thes. 2:13; Rom. 15:16). It is as the life-giving Spirit that Christ renews us in the spirit of our mind (Titus 3:5; Eph. 4:23). It is as the life-giving Spirit that Christ transforms us for God’s building through conformation and glorification (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29-30; Phil. 3:21).

Christ’s being the life-giving Spirit is the key to our experiencing all the riches of Christ. As the life-giving Spirit, Christ is everything to us subjectively as the solution to all the problems in the church. Without Christ being the life-giving Spirit indwelling our spirit, we have no solution! Christ as the life-giving Spirit is the unique answer. If Christ were not the life-giving Spirit, He would be merely historical and doctrinal; He could not indwell us to be our life, our life supply, and our enjoyment. But thank the Lord that He is the vivifying Spirit to impart all the riches of what He is into us to be the all-inclusive solution to the problems in the church for the building up of the Body of Christ! We should focus our entire being on the all-inclusive Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit to make us one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17).

The problems in the church are the issue of our focusing on persons, matters, or things other than Christ as our unique God-appointed center. God has called us to partake of, to participate in, the unsearchably rich Christ as our God-given portion for the building up of Christ’s Body. May we follow Paul’s pattern to love Christ, gain Christ, be found in Christ, know Christ, experience Christ, enjoy Christ, and minister Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ. AFC

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