

H Y M N S

Concerning the Experience of Christ as the Spirit

- 1 O Lord, Thou art the Spirit now
That gives us life and quickens us,
With all Thy riches strengthening,
O how divine and glorious!
- 2 O Lord, Thou art the Spirit now
That with Thy power liberates;
And by Thy liberation true
The law of life now regulates.
- 3 O Lord, Thou art the Spirit now
That transforms us and saturates,
And to Thine image true conforms
And with Thy light illuminates.
- 4 O Lord, Thou art the Spirit now
Who in my spirit makes His home;
He mingles with my spirit too,
And both one spirit thus become.
- 5 Lord, teach me how to exercise
My spirit now to contact Thee,
That in Thy Spirit I may walk
And live by Thy reality.

The pneumatic Christ is a term signifying that in His resurrection, Christ has become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). To say that Christ is now the Spirit for the purpose of imparting life into His believers is more than a matter of doctrine. It is for our experience of Him in the totality of His person and work. In this hymn, the writer, Witness Lee, considers the experiences which are available to us through the pneumatic Christ. We must not take these truths concerning the life-giving Spirit as mere teachings. We must put them into practice that we may enjoy and participate in the rich supply of Christ.

In His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus lived a normal human life in His incarnation, and through His crucifixion He accomplished redemption, terminated the old creation, and prepared the way to bring in the new creation. His earthly ministry ushered in His heavenly ministry. He initiated the new covenant through the shedding of His blood, but there is still a need for Him to labor as the Mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises (Heb. 8:6).

In incarnation the Lord, who was God, “emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). In other words, He changed from being in the form of God as God (v. 6) to being in the form of a slave as man. Then, in resurrection, for carrying out His heavenly ministry, He changed again: “‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul’; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). As the Spirit who gives life, Christ can be received by His believers and can transfer into them all the riches of what He is, what He has, and what He accomplished in His earthly ministry.

The hymn begins with the exultant declaration: “O Lord, Thou art the Spirit now / That gives us life and quickens us.” When we, the believers in Christ, come to the full realization that the Lord is now the Spirit who gives life to us, we are encouraged, comforted, and even inspired to live with Christ (Eph. 2:5) so that we might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). The Christian life to many believers is a constant pressure of attempting and failing to live up to the standard of the Lord’s human living. But only the life of Christ is able to live up to that standard. The good news is that because He is the Spirit now, He is able to enter into us and transfer His very life into our being. In this way we are able by faith to live the same life as He lived. The Bible tells us that Christ is our life (Col. 3:4). He can be our life because He is now the life-giving Spirit giving us His life and making us alive in Him and with Him.

Through the Spirit we may be strengthened with all the riches of the Father’s glory into our inner man. “With all Thy riches strengthening, / O how divine and glorious!” Paul prays for the Ephesians, “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man” (Eph. 3:16). The riches of the Father in verse 16 are the unsearchable riches of Christ in verse 8. Christ is unsearchably rich in His supply. By these riches, made available to us in the Spirit, we are strengthened for our daily living. Christ comes into us with the power of His indwelling person. Paul prays earlier in his Epistle to the Ephesians that they might be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know “what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength” (1:19). This power,

the resurrection power which operated in Christ to raise Him from the dead, is the power which now operates in "us who believe." The Christ who is unlimited and filled with immeasurable riches is for us to experience! "How divine and glorious!"

In the second stanza the Lord who is the Spirit now liberates His believers with a true liberation. In the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus says, "Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin....If therefore the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed (8:34-36). Paul unveils in Romans that sin is an indwelling factor within us: "But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me" (7:20). Sin, according to Paul, is a living thing that can dwell in us causing us to do things against our will. It can deceive us and kill us (v. 11). For this reason, we desperately need to be liberated. Christ as the Spirit "with [His] power liberates; / And by [His] liberation true / The law of life now regulates." Christ's way of liberating us from the power of indwelling sin is to come to indwell us as the Spirit with the law of life being the liberating power within: "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death" (8:2). The effectiveness of the Spirit's freeing power rests in His indwelling person. We cannot be free by outward regulation or even by enlightenment or revelation. We need the indwelling power of the Spirit to regulate us inwardly and thus free us from the power of the sin that dwells in us. Hallelujah! The Lord is the Spirit now to be that inner liberating power!

Stanza 3 highlights the further work of the Spirit in the inner being of every believer. On the negative side, He is freeing us from the law of sin and of death, which is the factor in our fallen nature that causes us to sin against God. But our fallen condition also debilitates us from doing that which is pleasing to God according to His life and nature. We not only sin on the negative side, but we also fall short of the glory of God on the positive side (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, on the positive side the Lord as the Spirit "transforms us and saturates, / And to [His] image true conforms / And with [His] light illuminates." The third stanza picks up the thought of the apostle in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18: "And the Lord is the Spirit; and...we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit." As the indwelling Spirit the Lord transforms us, changing us metabolically day by day from one degree of glory to another. The process of transformation is a part of the working of the Spirit. By His indwelling presence, He is saturating us with the life and nature of God, thus transforming us that we may become conformed to His very image (Rom. 8:29). How unsearchable are the riches of Christ, who is able to change men from fallen sinners into the many sons of God conformed to the image of the firstborn Son!

In the fourth stanza, the writer reflects on the procedure by which this mystery, which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27), becomes real to us practically in our experience: "O Lord, Thou are the Spirit now / Who in my spirit makes His home; / He mingles with my spirit too, / And both one spirit thus become." Christ becomes real to us because He as the Spirit enters into our human spirit and settles down, making His home in us. In Ephesians 3:16-17, the apostle prays, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith." When Christ in His incarnated state was present with His disciples, they could touch Him and handle Him, they could look upon Him and hear Him, but they could not receive Him to dwell in their hearts. Christ making His home in our hearts is not the action of believers treasuring an absent Savior in their hearts. Rather, it is Christ Himself entering into us and making His home in our hearts. By virtue of His being the Spirit, He is able to join Himself with His believers in their spirit; then, from their spirits He spreads into their inner parts to dwell in their mind, emotion, and will. The Spirit of Christ joins with each of His believers' spirit and mingles so that the two spirits become one (1 Cor. 6:17). Thus, what He is and what He has accomplished, obtained, and attained become an organic part of the believers.

The final stanza is the breathing out of a longing prayer of a disciple who wants to know and experience the reality of the indwelling Spirit: "Lord, teach me how to exercise / My spirit now to contact Thee." Christ is in us to give us Himself as our life, to liberate us from sin and to regulate us inwardly by the divine life, thus saturating and transforming us, even conforming us to His own image, the image of the firstborn Son of God. By His Spirit in our spirit, we already have received all of these riches of His divine life as the treasure in our innermost being. Then how may we learn to experience this rich supply "that in Thy Spirit [we] may walk / And live by Thy reality"? It is by the exercise of our human spirit. Since the Lord in resurrection is indwelling our spirit, it is of utmost importance that we exercise our spirit to contact Him. This means that we must open from the deepest part of our being and in faith join ourselves to Him to be one spirit with Him. He is within us; this is an accomplished fact. But our experience of His rich indwelling presence depends on our exercise to open our entire being to Him in faith by praying from deep within our inward parts, "Lord, teach me how to exercise / My spirit now to contact Thee."

by Gary Kaiser