

H Y M N S

Concerning the Experience of Christ as Life

- 1 Oh, what a life! Oh, what a peace!
The Christ who's all within me lives.
With Him I have been crucified;
This glorious fact to me He gives.
Now it's no longer I that live,
But Christ the Lord within me lives.
- 2 Oh, what a joy! Oh, what a rest!
Christ now is being formed in me.
His very nature and life divine
In my whole being inwrought shall be.
All that I am came to an end,
And all of Christ is all to me.
- 3 Oh, what a thought! Oh, what a boast!
Christ shall in me be magnified.
In nothing shall I be ashamed,
For He in all shall be applied.
In woe or blessing, death or life,
Through me shall Christ be testified.
- 4 Oh, what a prize! Oh, what a gain!
Christ is the goal toward which I press.
Nothing I treasure, nor aught desire,
But Christ of all-inclusiveness.
My hope, my glory, and my crown
Is Christ, the One of peerlessness. (*Hymns* 455)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). When the apostle Paul uttered these words, he seemed to be nearly beside himself with exultant joy concerning the mystery which had been hidden from the ages but now had been manifested to the apostles and prophets in spirit (cf. Eph. 3:4-5). Paul was in the full enjoyment of a great vision which had been given to him. His inward being was on fire with the burden of this vision. God has blessed us! The blessing of God is not merely to provide food for our table or a covering over our heads. Paul was not occupied with a God who would make him materially prosperous and superficially happy with the blessing of a peaceful and comfortable situation. Human beings are often shallow in their concerns, thinking that they will be content with a peaceful life that is free from problems. But Paul was clear that the real blessings from God are the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. His letter to the Colossians identified the contents of this vision by simply declaring it to be “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27). Paul’s realization was

that every spiritual blessing has been given to us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is God incarnate. By means of His incarnation, the Son of God became a genuine man possessing a human nature. He was God, possessing the divine nature, and He became a man with a human nature. He was a God-man. He came as the expression of God in a form that made God accessible to man (Eph. 2:18; John 1:18). He was full of grace and reality (v. 14). Through this unique person, we are able to obtain God and enjoy Him as our life and our everything. This comprises the blessing with every spiritual blessing.

Few believers realize their organic union with the Lord Jesus. When the Son of God came as the man, Jesus Christ, He came not simply to be an example of perfect human living. All true believers recognize this fact. But neither did the Lord come merely to accomplish a judicial redemption through the shedding of His blood for the sins of all mankind, even though this was a deeply significant part of His coming as the incarnate God. According to John 12:24, the Lord’s death as a grain of wheat resulted in the producing of many grains. This indicates that Christ’s death released the divine life which was in Him so that His believers could receive, participate in, and enjoy that same life as a divine fact in them. Christ is not just the objective Savior, but He is, even more, the divine life by which His believers can live a life that reproduces Christ Himself.

As Paul exulted in the rich enjoyment of the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, the author of this hymn, Witness Lee, rejoiced in the life which is the portion of those who believe in and receive the Lord Jesus in faith: “Oh, what a life! Oh, what a peace! / The Christ who’s all within me lives.” Life and peace, according to the apostle Paul, are the portion of those who set the mind on the spirit (Rom. 8:6). When the mind is set on the flesh, there is death and certainly there is the absence of peace. But the spiritual blessing, the divine fact that actualizes our experience of life and peace, is Christ living within His believers. The emphasis of the Bible is the organic union of God with man through the divine life that is imparted into those who believe into and receive Him. “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and

gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). Although many Christians know this verse intellectually, it seems that those who really delight in the life of the indwelling Christ are very few. The crucified life can be enjoyed only when the divine facts are applied to us by the indwelling Spirit of the Triune God. What are these divine facts? "With Him I have been crucified; / This glorious fact to me He gives. / Now it's no longer I that live, / But Christ the Lord within me lives." One of the most dynamic of the divine facts is that we have been crucified with Christ. Paul's word is not an allegory or a hyperbole. It is a fact for our experience in Christ's organic salvation.

At first sight, we may consider crucifixion with Christ to be an unpleasant experience that we must endure, our ceasing to exist as Christ comes in to live in our place. However, Paul says, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith," indicating that we live, yet we live by a new source, a new fountain within our being. To know this new source of living, we must first pass through death, the death of Christ. And this death of Christ spontaneously ushers us into the resurrection life of Christ.

We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life. For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection. (Rom. 6:4-5)

Because we have been terminated in His death we can walk in the newness of His life. It is an indescribable rescue to be delivered by His death into His resurrection life. Hence, crucifixion with Christ is a glorious fact that He gives to us so that we may be transferred out of death and into life. The death of Christ slays all of the inheritance that we have in the fallen nature. All sincere and honest Christians who seek to live a life of godliness and fruitfulness know the appalling feeling of being utterly unable to do what is in our heart to do. As Paul, we too have often felt the fearful conviction, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). Only those who understand the power of the death and resurrection of Christ can also utter Paul's cry of joyous relief, "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v. 25) It is unquestionably "this glorious fact."

Stanza 2 extends the view of the spiritual blessings which our God has given to us in Christ Jesus to include a fundamental change in our very being. Not only does Christ live in us, but He is also being formed in us: "Oh, what a joy! Oh, what a rest! / Christ now is being formed in me. / His very nature and life divine / In my whole being inwrought shall be." This progress of the divine life in the believer is introduced by Paul in Galatians 4:19: "My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in

you." The Recovery Version of the New Testament points out in footnote 4 of verse 19:

To have Christ formed in us is to have Christ fully grown in us. First, Christ was born into us at the time we repented and believed in Him, then He lives in us in our Christian life (2:20), and, finally, He will be formed in us at our maturity. Christ's being formed in us is needed that we may be sons of full age and heirs to inherit God's promised blessing, and that we may mature in the divine sonship.

The spiritual blessing is that we can become not only sons of God, but that we can grow into maturity, becoming the expression of Christ in our life and nature.

Stanza 3 further develops the blessings we have received in Christ: "Oh, what a thought! Oh, what a boast! / Christ shall in me be magnified." As a young man, I often marveled at the apostle's declaration in Philippians 1:20, "In nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body." "How," I wondered, "could Christ be magnified in a person's body?" Only after I understood that the divine facts (which were accomplished in Christ's death and resurrection) can now be applied to us in the organic salvation made available to us through "the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" could I understand (v. 19). Praise the Lord for this wonderful Spirit who now supplies us bountifully with the marvelous life of Christ; in this life being lived out of us Christ is spontaneously magnified in our mortal bodies. "Oh, what a boast!"

When we enter into the joy of this hymn, we too become somewhat beside ourselves with the worth of our wonderful Savior and, like the apostle, desire to pursue toward the goal of the prize of God's high calling: "Oh, what a prize! Oh, what a gain! / Christ is the goal toward which I press." Our Lord is worth the sacrifice of all things that we may gain Him: "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" (Phil. 3:8). The Christian life is a life of gaining Christ. Without Him there is no life and there is no peace; there is no joy and there is no rest; there is no thought we can relish, no boast that will not make us ashamed; and there is no prize and no goal worthy of our pursuit. Christ is the unique One in the universe who can impart life into us and dispense peace into our hearts. Only He can change our shameful living into a life that is the very expression of His divine life and nature. Only He can free us from the shame of sin and guilt so that in nothing shall we be ashamed. And only He is the unspeakable gift of our wonderful God who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.

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