

On Living with Christ

If we have asked Christ to come into our spirits, then He is living within. More than that, His Spirit is one with our spirit. Thus, He really couldn't leave us, without reversing the process of transforming our spirits into the nature of His Spirit.

But what if I have offended Him?

He doesn't say, "We will come unto Him, and make our abode with Him, until we offend Him." The picture of Christ, "scurrying" out the back door, because Satan has called at the front door is as unworthy, as it is absurd. It would be like the groom running home to mother because of a spat with the bride. Certainly there are offenses. Certainly, Christ is not always pleased with our fleshly actions. But, He must be pleased with our spirits, since He Himself occupies them.

But, if Christ is in us, why do we behave as we do?

Christ occupies our spirits, but not our flesh. Paul said, "*In me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing*" (Romans 7:18). And if Christ were in any part of our flesh, such a statement would be bordering on blasphemy. The flesh is only the vessel that contains the spirit. "*But God, who has commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face [presence] of Christ Jesus. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us*" (II Corinthians 4:6,7). There is no more crucial concept, in the matter of living with Christ, than this one. The Creator of the universe has actually touched our spirits with His light-energy, through the abiding presence of the Spirit of Christ. The word, translated, "face," in the King James Version, is the Greek word, *prosopon*, which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word, *liphney*, which is an idiomatic expression for actual presence—literally, "before the face of," or "face to face with," or "in the presence of."

In this touch of God, our spirits have been transformed—reconstituted, metamorphosed into something "other." "*We all, with open [unveiled] faces, beholding as in a glass [mirror], the glory of the Lord, are changed [transformed] into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (II Corinthians 3:18).

But Paul, who gave us these words said also, "*The good that I would I do not, and the evil [unsoundness] that I would not I do*" (Romans 7:19).

The truth of the matter is that the flesh is not, itself, transformed—only the spirit.

Then, how do we become perfect? Doesn't Paul say that God will "make us perfect to do His will?"

That is what the English translation says—the Greek text uses a word that means "to mend." The Spirit of God will "mend" us. But a mended vase is not a perfect vase. The spirit is perfect, but not the fleshly vessel.

Well then, what does the Holy Spirit do when He comes to our spirits?

He fills our spirits with Himself, and His attributes. He thus provides the motivation, and the understanding, to effect changes in our fleshly behavior. But, as long as we are on the earth, we will have to “keep a watch on our flesh.” If the flesh had been perfected, as the spirit, we would not have to keep a watch on it. It would be, spontaneously, perfect. However the spirit, filled with the Spirit of Christ, is transformed, and does, spontaneously, maintain an affinity toward God. The human mind responds to this Presence, by accepting God’s attitude toward sin and misbehavior. However even though its assessment of wrong doing, through the conscience, reflects God’s attitude toward sin, the flesh, in its weakened state, does not always perform as it should. Paul says, *“The will is present with me, but the performance of the good, is not”* (Romans 7:18 Greek).

This is not to say that misbehavior is acceptable, but rather that the human struggle does not shut us off from God. Though misbehavior is understandable, it is not without consequences. The children of God are in a position to know, above all others, the implications of sin—“The wages of sin is death”—and are motivated by the presence of the Spirit to control the rebel tendencies of the flesh. Thus, being spiritual (spirit in nature) one may desire to control the flesh, but controlling the flesh does not make one spiritual.

So, then, living with Christ is a matter of being possessed by His Spirit, and thus seeing the world and the flesh as He sees it.

It is a matter of living in the reality of that spiritual perspective, wherein we see ourselves, primarily, as spirit beings, imprisoned, for the moment, in a faulty clay vessel, but, nevertheless, possessing the vitality of the Spirit within.

It is not a matter of performing religious rituals, or focusing the mind on religious ideas, or always behaving perfectly, nor is it even, of trying to think about Christ every minute of the day. That, too, can be merely a religious exercise.

It is rather recognizing that the true nature of our being is spirit, and that the life we live in the flesh is only a temporary vehicle. It is a matter of recognizing that while we struggle daily in the flesh, our spirits remain strong, possessing the indwelling presence of Christ. The attributes of Christ are truly within us, but the capacity to express them is limited by the weakness of the clay vessel.

Remember always, that the proof of the presence of the Spirit of Christ within, is the transforming of the attitude, from that which is indifferent to, or negative about, the existence and will of God, to an attitude that desires, and accepts the existence and personal presence of the Spirit of God within, as well as his view of the world, and of sin, and an attitude that desires the fulfillment of His purposes for His creation in general, and one’s own personal life in particular.

To live with Christ, then, is not a matter of being religious, nor pious, nor perfect. Neither is it a matter of being intensely devoted, abundantly productive, as far as work is concerned. It is rather accepting one’s identity with Christ, as the basis of one’s life, and seeing one’s daily activity, in the light of that identity.

In view of all the foregoing, failure and weakness are a normal part of the daily struggle of the “vessel of clay.” But the “expert on weakness”—the Apostle Paul—gives us the ultimate encouragement. He had sought to be delivered from his own weakness, but God denied him that deliverance, in the following response—“*My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*” And, grasping the impact of these words, Paul responded—“*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in [readily accept] weaknesses, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions and distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong*” (II Corinthians 12:9,10).

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