

Christ and Christianity

Colossians 1.

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There are three points in this chapter which I want to bring simply before you; not in the order, however, in which they occur in the passage, because I am not going to instruct advanced Christians, but seek to meet the need of souls who are not fully established in the grace of God.

First, we have Christ, then Christian position, and thirdly, Christian practice. You must begin with Christ. Paul gives thanks when he hears of their faith in Christ Jesus: "We give thanks unto God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints" (ver. 3, 4). Whenever a person really has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it comes out in love to the people of the Lord.

Have you faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? May I give thanks to God for you because you have faith in the Lord Jesus? The moment Paul learned that these Colossians had faith in Jesus, he began to give God thanks for them.

Lower down in the chapter you will find the Christ in whom they had faith fully brought out; but here Paul was filled with rejoicing when he learned that there had really been faith in Christ Jesus — that they had turned round from themselves — that they had gone outside themselves entirely, to cling to the blessed One whom God had presented to the sinner as the object of his faith and trust.

What does God want? If there is a person not yet saved, what does God contemplate for that soul? What does He command? To turn to His Son — to receive His Son. For He has sworn by Himself that every knee shall bow to His Son — "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." Angels, men, and demons, all must bow to Christ. But it is not a question here merely of bowing to Christ, but of the soul of a sinner, conscious of his condition and state as a sinner, turning round to the Lord Jesus Christ, and truly and simply trusting Him as a Saviour. These Colossians, though they had been heathen, unbelievers, and ungodly, got tidings about God's beloved Son. He is presented to

them, and they trust Him. This is the first thing that God looks for. It is what He sends out the gospel to produce: "Faith cometh by hearing, and bearing by the word of God." What God wants is to produce a link of confidence between your soul as a sinner and His Son as a Saviour. Now what will produce that? A sight of Himself.

First of all, I would like to find out whom it is that I am called upon to trust. If I want to cross a bridge, I should wish to be sure that it is trustworthy; and if I am to trust a person, I must know him to be trustworthy. You will say to me, You want me to renounce myself thoroughly; to turn from self in every shape and form, and to trust myself simply and solely to Christ. just so; that is what I want — that is what God wants. But then I must first of all see who it is I am to trust.

1. — CHRIST.

Now if you will come down to the middle of the chapter, you will find the One whom God bids you trust. In verse 15 you will find brought out the Person of the One whom God says you are to trust, "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." Here I get the glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus. He was a real, true, living man; but He, who is this, is the image of the invisible God — God whom you never saw and never will see. Many people think that they will see God by-and-by when they get to heaven. They are mistaken. "No man hath seen God at any time." He dwells in "light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see:" and yet by-and-by, when I get up into the glory, I shall see and know this blessed living God. But how? In the Person of His own dear Son. Get hold of this clearly — "He is the image of the invisible God."

You remember that passage in Job 9 where poor Job, when his friends were tormenting him, asks, "How can a man be just with God?" If God were a man, he says. I would go to Him, I would speak with Him; but "He is not a man as I am," and therefore I am in hopeless darkness because He is not a man, and I cannot understand Him, nor reach up to Him. Job was in bewilderment; what he wanted was something tangible. He says, "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." What the sinner requires is one that can reach up to the lofty heights of the claims of God in holiness and righteousness, and come down to the profound depths of man's ruined and sinful state. This is just what we have in Jesus. "He is the image of the invisible God."

What is an image? It is not a likeness. An image might be no likeness whatever. Look at the stamp. It has the Queen's head upon it; it is not a bit like her, but it represents her. An image is that which represents and stands for one who is not in the scene; it gives the idea of representation. "The image of the invisible God" is One who stands for and represents God. The Lord Jesus is the One who comes down to represent God — He is God; and if I want to know the living God, where do I go? I gaze into the face of Jesus; I look at Him in the three-and-thirty years of His wondrous history in this sorrow-stricken and sin-stained world, where He was the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and I say, There is the One who is the image of the invisible God! Do you want to know God? Gaze on Jesus.

In connection with this, will you look at the First Epistle of John — "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5: 20, 21). What were these idols? The old Highland minister said they were little idols with white dresses and gaily coloured cloaks. Nay, it is not a question of an idol down here at all, but of having a thought of God that has not its perfect counterpart in Christ. Where is the true God seen? In the Man Christ Jesus. There are plenty of people who have idols — that is, who have not right thoughts of God. They have notions and thoughts about God for which there is no counterpart in Christ, and such have idols. Christ is the image of the invisible God, and whatever represents God falsely has no counterpart in Christ, and is therefore an idol.

This is a point of great importance; for there are many who, if asked, would say, I am afraid of God. If I were to ask them, "Are you afraid of Jesus?" they would answer, "No; somehow I feel I could trust Jesus — I should not be afraid if the Lord were upon earth — I could go to Him without fear, and I could weep at His feet, as the poor woman did at the Pharisee's house, and I should love to lean upon His bosom, as John did, but I could not draw near to God."

A young convert came to me one night when I had been drawing attention to this matter, and said, "I cannot thank you enough for that word. I have been converted and trusting in the Lord for many months, but I had an undefined fear of God. I loved the Lord, and could trust Jesus anywhere; but I had an idea that God was a little different from Christ, and thus I could not feel the same confidence in Him, but I see it now. I have got hold of Christ as the image of the invisible God, and it has made all happy."

Do you want to know God? Let me, take you to the Gospel of Luke (Luke 7), and let us look for a moment at that poor woman who was about to bury her only son, and she, too, a widow — a pitiable sight any day, but how much more pitiable now that her only son is to be buried. The Lord says, "Stop." He tells her not to weep. He says to the young man, "Arise;" and the dead man arose, and He delivered him to his mother. Now you will say, That was a very tender-hearted, gracious, compassionate man, who felt for the poor widow in her sorrow; and so indeed it was, but it was much more. That tender, compassionate man was a blessed, perfect expression of what God is in the very springs of His nature. You have a wrong thought of God if Jesus in His life and death does not fully portray Him to your soul. He is the image of God; and if I can trust Jesus, I can trust God.

Who was it that wept at the grave of Lazarus? A tender, compassionate man, who was the expression of God's own heart. Did He not weep in sympathy with the sisters at that grave? Most surely! He sighed in communion with God as He viewed the ravages sin had wrought, and wept in sympathy with the sorrowing sisters. Blessed Jesus! Such a heart as He had! "Never man spake like this man," said the officers of the Pharisees; and while fully endorsing this, we can surely exclaim, "Never man loved like this man!" I go to Him as a man, and I read in Him the very nature of God.

There is in Christ, so to speak, this double life, perfection of manhood before God, and all that God is in the grace of His heart, and in His holiness too, revealed before man. All that God is in the very essence of His nature is expressed in the words, the sighs, the tears, in every movement of the Man Christ Jesus. There. fore when Amos says, "Prepare to meet thy God," I reply, "I shall be delighted to do so. I shall meet Him, I shall see Him in the form of Him who is the sinner's Friend — the sinner's Saviour." Would you be afraid to trust Him? Though covered with the guilt of ten thousand souls, there is love enough in Him to meet it all, and value enough in His blood to put it all away.

But let us look at our chapter a little further. Not only is Jesus "the image of the invisible God," but He is the "firstborn of all creation." How is He the firstborn? "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (ver. 16, 17). It is perfectly clear He was not second then. People are disposed to say that He must be inferior to God because He became man. But no: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Go back to the beginning, to creation, and there He was. There was the One who began, and by whom all was made.

People often speak about God the Father as the Creator, but in Scripture creation is always referred to Christ. But why is He called the first. born of all creation? Because if He came into the scene of creation He must have the first place there. He is the firstborn: not as to time, but as to rank, and station, and dignity. He must have the first place. Won't you give it Him? If I look towards heaven, He made it; towards earth, He made it. He is the Creator, and more than that, He is the Redeemer. The One who undertakes my redemption is the Creator of heaven and earth. Who is the Man that comes down to redeem? The Creator: He who made all things. He humbles Himself and comes down into the scene He made, that He might glorify God, put away sin, abolish death, burst open the grave, defeat Satan, and bring man back to God. "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." But He is a man who has come down to die. I never can say that God died; but that He who died was God, and that He became a man that He might die. But if He becomes a man He must take the place of the firstborn. The firstborn of a family gets the title and property of the family. He is the one on whom the dignity and the glory of the family rest, and it is in this sense that Christ is said to be firstborn. I get Him as a man in this scene, perfectly representing God, and meeting man. Can you trust Him? Have you faith in Him?

Further. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." And in Col. 2 it is said, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." What a wonderful Being! In the Person of that blessed Man dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. I have God thus manifested in human form, at the same time that I get the perfect expression of what a man ought to be for God. If you trace Him from Bethlehem, where He came in, on to Bethany where He went out, what strikes one? If you look at His life, you will see that it is one sweet savour to God from His birth to His death; and one beautiful, shining stream of perfection, and grace, and beauty towards man, so that God was obliged from time to time to open the heavens and to say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." When your heart delights in your child, you delight to speak about it, even to others.

The Lord Jesus was One whose whole heart was towards God. He sets His face as a flint. "Lo, I come," He says, "to do Thy will, O God." and again in John 4, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." And in John 17, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;" and in John 19, on the cross He says, "It is finished," that we may hear it, and that we may know that the work has been done which sets our souls free before God. Is He not worthy of your confidence? Is He not the One on whom your soul can repose in the greatest gladness? Oh to be loved by this wondrous Being, this God-man — this man who is the expression of all that God is — God manifest in human form, and One who has glorified God even unto death! This is the love I rejoice in, the love of this precious One. If you have been a halting, hesitating sinner up to this point, do you not think that you can perfectly trust the Lord Jesus now? I see that it is God revealed in a real living man that I am to trust.

But not only is He "the firstborn of all creation," He is also "the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." And now He has gone up to God's right hand as One who can never die. Every one I love down here — those whom most I love — may die; death shoots its arrows relentlessly at those whom most I love, making a target for its shafts of the nearest and the dearest. How sweet and blessed, then, it is to hear the Apostle John say, "He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last; *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and of hades*" (Rev. 1: 17, 18). What then can I say? I may let the tendrils of my heart go out and twine around Him now, because there is no fear of those gentle cords being rudely snapped. Jesus is One who can never die now; He is alive for evermore. Here is One you may love without a bit of suspicion, without a bit of fear of your heart ever being wounded by His being taken from you. You can never be taken from Him, nor can He ever be taken from you.

We have thus seen the One whom God bids us trust; and again I repeat my query, Have you faith in Him? Surely He is worthy of your trust. Perhaps you fear He will not have you. So thought a young man to whom I was speaking after a meeting in London. I inquired, "Are you the Lord's tonight?" "I should like to be." "Can you trust Him?" "I think I could." "Are you willing to be Christ's?" "I am." "And is the Lord willing to have you?" "I don't know; I am not quite sure of that." "Oh," I replied. "Christ is thoroughly willing to have you; and if He is willing to have you, and you are willing to have Him, I call that a settled matter. You are in business?" "Yes." "Well, suppose I come to your warehouse and choose some goods. You fix the prices, and I am willing to buy. I name the quantity and the quality, and you name the figure. The whole thing is settled. What is that?" "I call it mutual agreement." "And is the bargain settled?" "Oh, yes, I have agreed to sell, and you have agreed to buy. It is mutual agreement." "Just so," I went on, "is the way a soul comes to Christ. Christ has agreed to have you and you to have Christ. That is mutual agreement. When the deciding point comes, there is mutual agreement between the Saviour and the sinner. The Saviour agrees to save, and the sinner agrees to be saved." "I think I see it clearly now," he responded, and left me with a bright smile of joy on his face.

If you have never done so hitherto, you must do what the child did. She called her father — "Father!" "Yes, my child." From the top of the house to the bottom she was calling, "Father, where are you?" She could not see him, as he was in a dark cellar, the only entrance to which was a trap-door in the floor, which she had never seen before. Standing over its edge, she said, "Father, I want to come to you." "Well, my child, come." "But there is no ladder, how am I to

come?" "Jump, and I'll catch you." "Oh, but, father, I don't see you." "But I see you, my child." Her faith was tried; she hesitated; could she trust him? In a moment more down she goes. Did she fall on the cold cellar floor? Oh, no, but on the bosom that loved her most on earth, and received the warmest kiss and the most tender embrace she had ever had, because she trusted him. Well, now, you have to trust the One you don't see. Cannot you trust Him now? There He is in. all His beauty at God's right hand, and all you have to do is to trust Him.

"Abraham believed God;" he took God at His word, and "it was counted to him for righteousness." Faith is taking God at His word. An old lady who was supposed to be dying sent for the one she had been long accustomed to hear preach the Word, and as he considered that she was dying, he thought it but right to ask, "What is your hope for eternity?" She answered through her feeble asthmatic breathing, "Sir — I - have — taken - God — at — His — word."

It was a grand answer: "I have taken God at His word." It is no question of how I feel, or what I have experienced or passed through. Many young converts try to decide their standing before God by their feelings and experiences, and hence never have settled peace. Such souls are like children to whom I give a handful of beans. The child sows them, and next morning goes to see whether the beans have sprung up and become scarlet runners. Not seeing them, she begins to wonder if they are there at all, and to rake and hoe the surface of the earth in order to make sure of it. "Leave them alone, silly child," I say, "and they will begin to grow in time." You say you trust Christ; but tomorrow, perhaps, you will begin to rake your heart to see whether you have received Christ, and whether you have the right kind of faith.

The seed is the Word, and the soil in which it is sown is the heart of man. "Leave it alone," God says. "The kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground." Leave it alone. It gets the dew by night, and the sun by day. And what comes? "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Don't be looking at the surface of your heart and at your feelings, but take God at His word. I took God at His word fifteen years ago, and He is as true today as He was then. You may ask me, "Have you not been a poor, feeble, faltering child since then?" "Yes, alas! I have." "Has not God been disappointed in you?" "No." "How is that?" "Because He knew I was good for no. thing when He took me up." The question of worthiness was settled on the spot. Who was the worthy one? Christ. Am I then to give thanks to God for you today that you really trust Christ? If you really do trust Him, if your soul is settled, we can look a little at

2. — CHRISTIAN POSITION

Let me show, you what it is to be a Christian. Look at verse 12 — "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." The moment you have faith in God's Son, you are fit to be with Him. The work of Christ alone makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. And who are the saints? Are you a saint? "Oh, no, sir." Why not? "Why, a saint is a very holy person." A saint is one who has been set apart to God by the work of Christ and the action of the Holy Ghost. But, you will say, there must be sanctification. What does being sanctified mean? Separated to God. There is nothing so simple as sanctification as it is given us in Scripture. If you call practical holiness sanctification, it follows justification. But there is a sanctification which comes before it — "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus,

and by the Spirit of our God." So that really, viewed in one aspect, a man is sanctified before he is justified.

Some will be saying, "This is not right doctrine." But look at 2 Thess. 2: 13 — "We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This is the *divine* and *human* side of the effect — namely, of God's having *chosen* you to salvation. It is not a question of you "brethren, who love the Lord," but of "brethren beloved of the Lord." "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Now you will say, "There is election coming in — that dreadful thing election. You don't believe that Christ died for all?" Indeed I do, because God says so. "Then what is election?" It is a family secret, and you must be in the family of God to understand it.

Suppose I were going up to a gate, and I find written upon the gate, "Whosoever will may enter in." I say "That's free enough; I'll go inside." "But how do you know that it means you?" It says "whosoever;" that means me, and anybody. I touch the door, it flies open; I enter, the door closes, and on the inside of it I see written there, "Whosoever gets inside this door never gets out." Now, election secures this. God takes good care that the soul who believes His word never shall be lost. "God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The two things, *sanctification of the Spirit* and *belief of the truth*, are inseparable; where one is the other must be. Look at God's Word. "He has chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit — AND belief of the truth."

Supposing, three weeks ago, a sinner — we will say some young woman — has been awakened by the preaching of the Word and has gone back to her home. She has no longer any taste for the world. She is miserable. Her friends can't understand the change, nor can she, for she has no joy or peace: only the sense of sin and longings Godward. The Spirit of God quickened her three weeks ago, and separated her to God. Perhaps, through reading Scripture, she gets hold of the truth, believes in Jesus, and the truth sets her free. The Spirit works, the soul is quickened, sanctified, believes, so that of it it can be said, "God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

To illustrate it, let us imagine we have got upon the table a dead man. He is unconscious; you can touch him; he feels nothing. I take 100lb. weight and lay it upon his chest. He is quite unconscious of it. But supposing that I by any means infuse life into the man, he wakes up to consciousness, and the first thing that he does is to give a deep groan, and exclaim, "Oh, this burden, this weight!" just so it is not till the sinner is quickened by the Spirit of God that he feels his sin, and begins to groan, and to desire to find salvation. What can he do then? He is compelled to let somebody else come and take the weight off him. That is what Christ did when He died upon the cross. That was the work which put my sins away. Christ comes and does the work, and the Holy Ghost leads me to see the work that put away my sins.

Our meetness for glory is the work that Christ has done for us, and which fits us for the presence of God. Hence it is written in Hebrews 2: 11 — "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." (In passing, let me say that I earnestly hope that every one of you would be thoroughly ashamed to

call Him "Brother." Never call the Lord Jesus an "Elder Brother." It is most irreverent, though He may in His grace call us brethren.) He has finished redemption completely. He has done the work that puts our sin away, and He says, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He tells Mary Magdalene, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father." She comes to Thomas and says to him, "The Lord bids me come and say that you are his brother." Thomas says, "I don't believe it." But afterwards he does believe it, and the moment he finds himself in the presence of Jesus, what does he do? He bows down and says, "My *Lord* and my God!" Ah, Thomas, you are right, and we all may learn from you. in this respect.

God has set us in His own presence, and "made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." But there are the two sides of sanctification. There is the doctrinal side; but there is also the progressive or the practical side. When a soul has received the Lord Jesus Christ, there ought to be progress practically; but first of all I get my position, and I must regulate my behaviour by the relationship in which I stand. For instance, I don't behave to you as your child would. Why? Simply because I am not your child. I must know that I am a child of God before I can walk like a child of God.

Now, then, having received Christ, you are fit for glory. What next? "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (ver. 13). We used to be Satan's slaves, kept in the dark, but now we are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. We are in the place where Christ rules and reigns, delivered out of Satan's kingdom altogether. I am entitled to know that I have a new place before God, delivered from darkness, and brought into His light. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (verse 14). We know that we are redeemed, and we know that we are forgiven. There is no doubt about it at all. Mark these five points: We *are* "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" — for the light in which God dwells. Secondly, we *are delivered* from the power of darkness. Thirdly, we *are in* the kingdom of the Son of His love. Fourthly, we *are redeemed* through His blood. Fifthly, we *have* the forgiveness of sins.

Perhaps you will say next Sunday, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." In the forgiveness of whose sins? Not of everybody's, for that would not be true. In the forgiveness of Paul's or Peter's sins? That would not do any good. Do you believe *your* sins are forgiven? "No, I could not be sure of that." It comes to this, then: you believe in "the possibility of the forgiveness of sins." But I believe that my sins are forgiven. That is what faith does. I believe I am forgiven through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At this point Paul stops, and says, as it were, I cannot tell you more about the blessing. But I must tell you about the Person who has brought the blessing in. You are redeemed out of bondage, and now I should like you to know more about the Person of the One who has redeemed you. He is the image of the invisible God. All fulness was pleased in Him to dwell. You are made *meet* for heaven. You are *delivered* from darkness. You are *translated* into the kingdom of God's dear Son. You are *redeemed*, you are *forgiven*. Yet there is even more than this. *Peace* is made through the blood of His cross. What is peace? It is the complete settlement of every question between the soul and God through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only

have I committed sins, but I have a sinful nature. It too has been condemned in the cross of Christ. He has made peace by the blood of His cross.

Sixthly, then, you have *peace* with God; and seventhly, you *are reconciled*. "You that were some time alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now *hath he reconciled* in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight" (ver. 21, 22). That is how it all comes - through the death of Jesus clearing away *my* sins, and I may say, *myself too*; and He is going to present us holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight.

But now comes a terrible word. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled." I ask you, Do you mean to continue in the faith, or do you mean to give Christ up and go back to the world? "Of course not," you will say. I do get "ifs" and "buts" sometimes in Scripture, and they art wholesome landmarks. If I see a man going on with the world, I say, That ends in death; and if I walk after the flesh I shall die. God's Word is very plain about this. "If ye walk after the flesh ye shall die;" and I take that in its strongest meaning — ye shall be eternally lost — not spiritual death, nor death of the body, but that death is the end of walking in the flesh; *i.e.*, the end of that road is the lake of fire; and the end of the other road is the presence of God. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard," He presents you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight.

What a new place to be set in! How has it come in? Through death. Christian position means a man being in Christ. It is the butterfly-state, if I may be allowed the expression. What was the caterpillar-state? Is it the state that man was in, in the flesh? What then does the chrysalis-state set forth? Death. I accept the sentence of death that lies upon me, and the truth that I am dead with Christ. But what now? The warmth of summer comes; the chrysalis breaks its shell, and out comes the butterfly. That is Christianity. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." You could not tell in looking at the butterfly and the caterpillar that they are the same being. The caterpillar was a grovelling creature, a constant marauder; the butterfly has a different life, a different nature altogether. "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." There is the caterpillar. There is man in the flesh; an enemy to God by wicked works.

There are three kinds of works spoken of in Scripture, "wicked works" (ver. 21), "dead works" (Heb. 9: 14), and "good works" (ver. 10). Wicked works are those of the lost, careless man. But supposing he turns away from wicked works to do religious works, these are what are called in Scripture "dead works." Which do you think the better? I know that "dead works" or religious works are better in man's sight, but neither are the fruit of the Spirit, nor have they any connection with Christ. The believer's instruction is, "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain *good works*." For my own part, I don't believe in a person's Christianity unless there is, after conversion, a great change in his life.

3. — CHRISTIAN PRACTICE.

We get the new practice of a Christian if we go back now to verse 9. "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." As a believer, it

is your privilege to know and to do the will of God. Christ Himself came to do the will of God, and you are filled with the knowledge of all that He desires. "Filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." You have a sense of what suits the Lord. You have His mind. You have learned the meaning of Ecclesiastes 10: 9, 10. "He that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby. If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength; but *wisdom* is profitable to direct." Or you are like the two hundred men of Issachar. Of them we read, "And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chr. 12: 32). You get the mind of the Lord, and you have to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing — pleasing the One who has delivered you. The new nature delights in this. I confess that I do like to do what I like. How is this? Because I like to do what the Lord wants me to do. The new creature delights in the will of God. But perhaps you will say, "You will put him under law, won't you?" No; for the old man was regulated or bound by no law, and the new man requires no law to bind him, because he is a divinely regulated being, a new creature in Christ Jesus. People are fond of being under the law, because it speaks of themselves, and occupies them with themselves. The gospel is all about Christ from first to last.

The Christian life is the reproduction of Christ down here, but you must begin at God's end. It makes all the difference which end of a telescope you look through. If you look in at the big end of a telescope, do you think you will see anything there? I know what you will see - yourself. And if people look at their own experience and feelings, it will do them no good; but if they looked at Christ, they would bring forth fruit to Him. "Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (ver. 10); day by day your soul enlarging in its capacity to enjoy God. I don't understand a Christian not full of joy, but going about with his head bowed down like a bulrush. There may be false professors, and they ought to be miserable, but this only proves what I say.

Supposing we get a bad bank-note, it is but the witness that there are a great many good notes. If you by grace have turned to the Lord, be the real thing, "walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Now I want to give you a golden rule. You often want to know whether you can go here or there. A friend asks you to go with him somewhere. You are not sure whether it would be right. Whatever you do, don't go and ask a good person if he would go, but go and ask the Lord if He would go. Would you not like to please the one you love best? And whom do you love best now? Jesus. Then the answer is very simple. Will it please Him? If it won't please Him, it won't please me.

"Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness" (ver. 11). God will strengthen us. poor, weak, feeble ones as we are, to all patience; and that is what we all need. We are oftentimes weary, the road seems long, and we need patience. You are never to be impatient. You may say, I have a bad temper, and can't help it. The Lord is the great One, the only One to cure bad tempers. Christ never had one, and the Christian is to live Christ, to follow Christ. Some. times, instead of being strengthened to long-suffering with joyfulness, we are apt to be short-suffering with grumbling. Amid all the trials of earth, a Christian should be like the lark, or like the cock-rob-in in a storm. Many Christians are like the hen in a storm; and we all know what a hen in a storm is. She is overwhelmed by it. We

are not to be like a duck, indifferent to the storm; nor like the hen, alarmed and upset by it; but like the robin, who feels it keenly, but sings his sweet song in the midst of it.

What, then, is the position of the Christian? Meek for glory, delivered from the power of darkness, translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love, redeemed, forgiven, at peace with God, reconciled, and about shortly to be presented before Him. If you knew that you were going to be presented at court, you would say, "I should like to be all fit and ready." And you cannot tell the moment when you are going to be presented, not at an earthly court, but into the very presence of the King of glory in the courts of heaven.

Meanwhile you will be strengthened by His might to all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness. Thus we shall be above the trials of the way. There will be many pin-pricks — domestic, business, and ecclesiastical ones. You may get many pin-pricks from your brethren, and even from the sisters too, but Christ's power sustains the soul above all. We have to live where the Lord sets us down, and to suffer there, and to go through it all the expression of joy in Himself.

May the Lord strengthen us, by His Spirit which dwells in us, to live a *little like* Him here, till caught up to be *fully like* Him there!