

## Christ "formed in you."

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(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 17, 1925, page 184.)

A servant of God like the Apostle Paul, who combined in himself both the evangelist and the shepherd of souls, could not rest content with the outward profession of conversion or the outward assumption of the Christian place, no matter how many such professions there were. Nothing but inward reality would satisfy him. The churches of Galatia had their origin in the enthusiastic reception they gave to Paul and his message. In his epistle to them he does not deny their profession nor their church position, but he does express grave apprehension as to them, and an anxiety so acute as to be comparable to birth-pangs, because as yet he could not recognize that Christ was found in them and consequently he had to say, "I stand in doubt of you" (Gal. 4: 19, 20).

We call attention to this because the tendency to rest content with mere profession is very strong at the present day. It is good when souls profess faith in Christ, and thereby take the place of being "in Christ" — whether they realize the meaning of that term or not. What the true servant of Christ longs for, however, is to find Christ formed in ours, for then *he knows* they are in Christ, and all doubt of them is removed from his mind.

In the latter part of Romans 5 we have man's need, and the Divine intervention in view of man's need considered from the standpoint, not of offences, but of nature and heredity. Adam was, as we may call him, the old fountain-head of humanity, and alas! that fountain and the stream which has proceeded from it are hopelessly defiled and corrupt. God has intervened by raising up a new fountain-head in Christ, once obedient unto death and now risen from the dead. Here all is perfection and by the full gift of grace the believer comes under this new Headship and partakes of this new source of life. We have not read far into Romans 6 before we meet with the expression "in Christ Jesus" for the first time in the epistle as applied to ourselves. We are to reckon ourselves "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6: 11, N.T.). We have "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6: 23, N.T.), and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8: 1).

Just as *in connection with the dispensational ways of God*, Gentiles who by nature are like wild olive branches have been "grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree" (Rom. 9: 24), so, *in connection with God's eternal purpose* have we believers, who were but sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, been grafted into Christ, and now stand *in Christ*. In nature the good is always grafted into the worthless stock, in grace, whether it be a question of God's ways or of His vital and eternal purpose, the thing works in the contrary direction. We who believe are of God in Christ Jesus. (See 1 Cor. 1: 30) By a Divine act of infinite favour we find ourselves to be partakers in the very life and nature of Christ. From Him we derive and in Him we stand.

We are not, however, in Christ apart from the Spirit of God. If Romans 8: 1 speaks of us as "in Christ Jesus," verse 2 speaks of the spirit as "the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and He indwells us so that He may extend His "law" or control over us, thus liberating us from the control which formerly sin and death exerted within us. As the *Spirit of life in Christ Jesus* He brings *that blessed life* into evidence in the saint. As the *Spirit of Christ* He forms *Christ* in us; and this is the subjective counterpart to being in Christ.

By way of illustration consider again the matter of grafting. If in nature it were possible to work it in this contrary direction so that a branch of wild olive were grafted into the good olive tree to partake

of its root and fatness, what would be the effect? Surely this, that the erstwhile wild olive branch would begin to put forth good and cultivated berries. Thus, and only thus, would it prove to the gardener the reality and effectiveness of the grafting operation. The reality of the branch being *in* the good olive would be attested by the good olive, in the visible shape of its good fruit, being *formed in it*.

Now it was just here that the trouble lay with the Galatians. The true gospel had been preached amongst them, for Paul was the preacher. They had ostensibly received it and were professedly in Christ, but instead of Christ being so definitely formed in them that they were zealous for Him, they were desiring to be under law, and the apostle who was their spiritual mother was thrown again into birth-pangs of soul on their account.

What would be Paul's state of mind if he stood in the midst of professing Christians today? What travail would be his! But Paul is not here. Would it not be well then if we each endured a little travail over this question? — and possibly each endured it over his own case. Self-examination, when it has become a chronic habit, is not good; yet there are moments in all our histories when it is very profitable as leading to self-judgment. If self be judged, then Christ alone fills the vision of the soul. The spirit of self-judgment consequently is always good.

The assembly at Corinth was in a poor condition. In his first epistle Paul plainly tells them that they were carnal. In his second he indicates that they were worldly (see 1 Cor. 6: 11-18). It was to such believers that he said, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me . . . examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (2 Cor. 13: 4, 5). That which is by profession the church today is swamped in carnality and worldliness. Would not the apostle then say just the same thing to us today?

In writing to the Galatians he speaks of himself thus: — "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*" (Gal. 2: 20). So Paul was a shining example of that which he desired so earnestly in the Galatians. Later on in the epistle, too, he details for us "the fruit of the Spirit," as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5: 22, 23). These nine features set before us the life of Christ. They preach to us *Christ characteristically* — the fruit of the Spirit and the outward result of *Christ formed in us*.

Let each of us earnestly consider these things for, in a day of much outward profession, inward reality is of all importance.