

“I no longer live – but Christ lives in me”

Gal. 2:20b

Light on the Rock
by Philip Shields

Abstract: First we must be crucified with Christ. Only then can He live in us, and for the first time we can say we have true LIFE. Why salvation must be Christ’s work, and not our own. Why He must live in us, and not our own life. How Christ comes to live in us. Also: He must increase, but we must decrease. Signs we are letting Christ live in us. How in our weakness, Christ’s strength is magnified.

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Greetings to all of you in Christ; all of you who are no longer “in the flesh, but in the spirit, if the spirit of God dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9a).

Today, as I record this on Pentecost, we’re going to finish the second part of Galatians 2:20 – and this time emphasizing the phrase, “I no longer live – but Christ lives in me.” This topic is especially appropriate in this Pentecost season, when *God* came to live in us via His Holy Spirit He’s given us. If you want a title and topic for today – that’s it: Christ must now live in us. This is a natural follow-up to my last message – on being “Crucified with Christ”. Please note: no one can have Christ live in him/her until we *first* crucify the self. So that’s why this message builds on the last one. Let’s read Galatians 2:20-21 again. We have no real life, until Christ lives in us. Please note that.

(By the way, if you usually just print out the transcripts, why not also try hearing the audio some time? The audio usually has extra material, and sometimes the “transcript” has extra material. I recommend you hear it and print out the transcript as well).

Galatians 2:20-21

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

In what way does Christ live in us? Christ lives in us by His Spirit and a special relationship is established (1 John 3:24b; 4:13). When He comes into us, we also become part of HIS body by this same spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), making our bodies the very temple of God. God comes into us, and God considers us as abiding in HIM as well. Those who have God’s spirit are said to be “In HIM”, or “in Christ”.

God’s spirit also makes us members of one another! But all relationships have to be nurtured, fed, and stirred up – or else all relationships will die, either slowly or even suddenly. Next year I may give a message about how to stir up the Spirit so it grows in us. On this day of Pentecost, God gave us the “earnest” – or the downpayment, deposit - - of the Holy Spirit. The Greek for “earnest” is arrabon. Interestingly enough, in modern Athens, it’s the name given to an engagement ring. They call it “arrabona”. On this day, God gave us His promise to marry us by giving us a deposit, a promise, an engagement ring of the Holy Spirit.

Why has it been so long since my last message? Here’s why: I don’t feel very qualified to talk about this. I know I all too often do not let Christ live in me the way He wants to. I know there are too many times I do *not* let His mind be in me, too many times I do not follow His lead. Oh, I know it would sound more pastoral to say otherwise, but the truth is I think way too many of us who claim to follow our Lord – don’t even have a clue about what that means.

As we talk about “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me”, I make an observation: many claim to do this, but I know of almost no one who truly does to the degree God wants us to.

When Christ really lives in someone, there has to be a total, dramatic change in that person’s life. Are you filled with God’s spirit – or not? Or are you just living on your own power and abilities?

But we are hardly the people who are representing lives that show Christ is alive in a group of people. We are in the age just prior to the return of Christ, or so I hope. If I’m right, God’s people are characterized by Laodecianism (Rev. 3:14-21), sleep, stupor, lukewarmness and love growing cold. If I’m right, we’re the people who have every reason to be the most humble -- for little good is said about us in this end age. We’re the people of whom Christ asks, “Shall I find faith upon the earth”, when He returns. We’re the people who have all but decimated the church into splinters. And we brag about how our splinter group is better than someone else’s splinter group. Since when, dear brother and sister, is a splinter a good thing for a body – especially the Body of Christ? Add to that, that we have ministers disfellowshipping other ministers and refusing to let repentant children of God from worshiping God with them. God save us!

But my point is, I believe very few people have truly crucified themselves. For if we really understand crucifixion, who would voluntarily come forward to be scourged - - to have our flesh ripped off our bodies until we are nothing but bloody pieces of hamburger? And after that, who would volunteer to be stripped stark naked, have big spikes pounded into your hands and feet and have that pole slammed into the ground, or attached to a standing tree – and let crows and insects pick away at you until you died? Who would do that? Do you really think you have? Frankly right now, I know I have yet to truly crucify myself. So as I preach this today, know I preach to myself. And this also explains why it has been so long since my last sermon! I’m coming to see how little of Christ is in me right now, and how much more I must die to the self, and how much more Jesus has to come live in me.

We like to think the end time church will be a power house of God’s Spirit. I know the 2 witnesses will be. But does it say the whole end time church will be like that – or in fact, is the end time church described by Laodecianism?

So this message is very heartfelt. Why am I giving it, if I don’t feel qualified? Because that’s the very reason why I need to study this topic. It’s the nature of all my studies: I study a topic I know I need to grow in, first and foremost, and then I share it with others who may benefit from what I’ve learned.

First we have to die to the self before there can be a resurrection of the Son of God in our lives. It’s the resurrection Jesus we want in us, living in us, guiding us, and in a perfect world – we follow. Paul even said, “I die daily”. (1 Cor. 15:31). That’s going to be a huge key, as a friend of mine recently shared with me. For Christ to live in us daily, we have to die to the self daily. Only then can we really let Christ live in us daily.

As we go through today’s message, I ask each one of us, “what’s holding us back from becoming who and what we already are, already can be, in Christ?” What’s holding us back from exhibiting the mind, the love, the power, the faith, yes—the very life – of the son of God?

THAT NO ONE CAN BOAST

In the last 5-6 sermons I’ve preached, I’m been building on the one fact that salvation is 100% from God. Our life in Christ is all about God and what HE is doing and has done in us. From Genesis to Revelation, the message is that there is ONE God, one creator. He formed and created the first man from the ground, and the first woman from that man. God is also creator of the New Creation that we are. We cannot, and are not, creators of the New Creation, for there is but one Creator. Jesus is the 2nd Adam, and we are members of that body. Jesus of course, was God himself, and was uncreated God.

So why do we still try to exalt ourselves? And we do.
How?

On Christian websites, why do we bother with long “about us” links? What our websites should be all about is about God and the Savior He sent to us.

When we are impressed by our credentials, our biographies, our autobiographies, our experiences – we’re missing the point! We can so easily start thinking we are something – instead of GOD is everything.

The point is: it’s not about us! Thank God for that, for if it were about us, we’d be nowhere but in hell fire! But by the grace of God, I’m able to talk to the #1 Being in all the universe, receive forgiveness for everything I’ve done - - even things some might describe as “unforgivable” – and talk of His love, HIS grace, HIS power, HIS love, HIS new creation, HIS spirit, HIS works, HIS righteousness – and HIS LIFE that He now offers to live for me and in me, when I let Him and IF I would just get my old condemned self out of the way! Of course, once we are in Christ and letting HIM live, there is no longer any condemnation (Romans 8:1).

In the Old and New testaments, God usually picked people who had no resumes. Why? So that no man or woman could boast! PAUL was a despicable person prior to conversion. Mean, murderous, tough! MOSES was a felon on the run. Jonah was hard hearted. Elijah felt sorry for himself. David caused the death of thousands of innocent men and women by his reckless numbering of Israel and many more were killed when he stole a man’s wife and got her pregnant, even as he was already writing scripture! SARAH was abusive and mean to Hagar. Gideon – mighty warrior – was really afraid and timid.

God used them all to bring Himself glory, so that it was obvious that in their weakness *God* could shine. That’s today’s message. We’ve got to learn to live by God’s power, not our own. We now live as one following God’s mind, not our own thinking.

Let’s let God speak to us from His own word now:

1 Corinthians 1:27-31

“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base

things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, **29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.** 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, *who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption --* 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and **that not of yourselves**; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

You’re not going to be saved by what you do, but by grace and through faith. We are rewarded by what we do. We are saved by grace, rewarded by works. But that’s for another day. Turn to Jer. 9.

God isn’t interested in how smart we are, how fit we are, how strong we are, how attractive we are or how much money we make, or what kind of house we have or car we drive or how prestigious our profession is.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

23 Thus says the LORD:

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might,
Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;

24 But **let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me**, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. **For in these I delight,**" says the LORD."

So, do we know God? I say most of us don’t. The rest: probably barely. But God wants us to realize it’s all from Him. God doesn’t choose people because of what they bring to the table.

I’ve heard – and have given—sermons about Gideon’s 300 men, for example, where we try to explain that those final 300 were the equivalent of our Delta Force or our elite forces. They were ready, tough men. These were the ones God wanted -- some of us have preached. I don’t think so anymore. Why would God change His way of working? He started by startling Gideon, calling him “mighty warrior”, when in fact he was hiding in a hole for fear! I believe these 300 were the LAST ones you’d want to go into battle with. Why? So it was clear that this incredible victory was from GOD! These were the Geek Squad! I really believe that now. Everything God did in the case of Gideon was to make it clear where the victory was going to come from.

Judges 7:2 “And the LORD said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'”

God realized that even with just 32,000 Israelites vs. 135,000 Midianites (Judges 8:10) – it could be argued that Israel was simply a better fighting force. So God whittled it down to 300, whom I believe were the least likely ones anyone would pick.

God hasn’t changed his tactics. Why do you think you are among the called? Because you bring something to the table? I say “no way”. I’ve heard sermons which said: “God picked you because He saw something in you that He needed and could use in His body”. I think God’s word shows us otherwise. God picked you so that you could not boast, for the precise reason you needed God more

than He needs you! And that applies to me too. God picked you so it is obvious that whatever He decides to do through us, is in spite of us. In our weakness God is seen as strong.

Paul understood! He had an impressive resume! God had to take him down a peg or two or in order to really use him. What Paul says in 2 Cor. 12 is very instructive to us all.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 “Concerning this thing [what he calls ‘a thorn in the flesh’] I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for **My strength is made perfect in weakness.**” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, **that the power of Christ** may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**” 2 Cor. 4:7 says we are mere earth, so God's power can be showcased.

What’s he saying? When clearly some incredible things are happening in spite of being stoned and left for dead, in spite of pain, in spite of setbacks, in spite of weak oratorical skills – then it’s clear that GOD is the one moving here!

John, the voice in the wilderness, also got it. When He saw Jesus beginning His ministry, John did not feel threatened as some of John’s followers began moving over to Jesus’ followers. A carnal mind would feel like his turf had been threatened. But what did John say in **John 3:30**? “He must INCREASE, but I must decrease.”

In every case, those with whom God is working realize the power of GOD is what must be seen.

Hebrews 11:33 – “out of weakness were made strong”.

So when we walk in the spirit, work in the spirit and live in the spirit – it is GOD who is working, and not us. When Christ lives in us, our weakness won’t matter. He’ll live – instead of us.

HOW WE KNOW IF WE ARE DEPENDING ON Christ IN US

Right now let’s briefly cover how we can tell if we are living by our own power – or Christ’s power.

First of all, I think if most of us are honest with ourselves, we will immediately know the answer.

However, if you wonder, here are just a few, quick tell-tale signs:

- We are not living by the power of Christ if we do not pray every day. How could we?
- We are not living by the power of Christ if we fret or *worry* a lot. Christ didn’t worry. If we’re worrying, we’re not leaving things at the throne of God and letting God handle things.
- We are not living by the power of Christ if aren’t letting Him speak to us in daily devotional time and private Bible study – “collecting our daily manna”, as I would put it.
- If we are trying to make everything work out ourselves, planning every detail, striving to make everything work out – but without committing all things to God for His blessing, HIS will, HIS might and HIS purpose to be done, we are not yet letting the living Christ live in us.

- If our lives are mostly being lived for the flesh, if our mind is on things of this world, if we are stumbling and sinning a lot with the same old sins over and over – is that Christ in us?

On the positive side: If Christ were truly and fully living in us

If Christ was living perfectly in you, you would be living like Jesus did while He was on the earth! You would be living and doing all things through Christ.

Let me say this now, if Christ is living in us, we’ll be experiencing more and more of the following, at ever deeper levels in our lives – though we fall far short from doing these things 100%:

- Jesus’ faith will allow us to sleep through any storm of life as He did.
- For the first time, we will have real LIFE. HE is the life. There is NO life apart from Christ.
- His peace will let us endure our cross- - “for the joy set before” you, just as HE did (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- His obedience will lead you and me to always seek to please Father in heaven as well.
- We will – more and more- be holy and live a holy life, for He is holy who is in us. (1 Pet. 1:16). Yes, you and I still fail, sometimes horribly – but those are times Christ is not living in us.
- His **grace** will lead us to help repentant sinners feel welcomed and uncondemned in our presence, as He often did – to Zaccheus, to the woman caught in adultery, and many more.
- HIS **love** will be what exudes from us – in every look, every action, and every word. GOD is love.
- His concern will lead us to pray for one another when we see Satan stalking a brother (as Jesus said to Peter: I have prayed for you, for Satan asked to sift you like wheat- Luke 22:32.)
- His forgiving heart will lead us to reconcile and not hold on to grudges, as Jesus forgave even those who reviled Him as He hung on the cross – Luke 23:34. Whom have you not forgiven?
- His JOY will allow us to fellowship with those others feel are unforgivable sinners - - just as Jesus was famous for having dinner with those considered “the sinners” of society, adulteresses, tax collectors, and so on. How are you doing on that score?
- We’ll have no racial biases, no tribal prejudices – for you Kenyans hearing this. Jesus healed Samaritans and Romans and preached to them as readily as He did the Jews. Remember the leper who returned to say “thank you”? He was a despised Samaritan.

In a nutshell, when someone has spent time with us, if Jesus is fully living in us, they’ll have met – at least to some degree – Jesus Christ. DO people see, hear, and experience Jesus when they spend time with you and me?

I know, I fail a lot too. But if Christ is in us powerfully, those failures will be farther and farther apart, and we’ll evidence Jesus more and more often.

If Christ lives in us, WE could be doing “all things” – anything in God's will

We could have Power in His might. Don’t forget the Spirit has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:6-7). We can taste the victory because of what GOD does....whether it’s something we need to overcome, or a trial we have to win, or a crisis that needs to work out alright.

Remember David? He did it both ways: he did it right, and he did it wrong.

David did it right with Goliath. Israel’s armies saw a powerful army opposite them, and a giant champion who was challenging anyone to fight him one-on-one. David saw a pitiful human being who thought he could go against the Creator and all the power that God has at His disposal? That’s what David saw. David realized his God was much bigger than any giant.

David also got it wrong, when he numbered Israel and apparently took his focus off God and perhaps got a bit lifted up when he focused on the numbers of his army.

Do we learn from this? When we see the giant problems around us – or do we see GOD, who is bigger than anything facing us? Satan likes to present himself and his people as more powerful. David realized that “He who is in us is greater than he (Satan) who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). By God’s spirit, we have GOD HIMSELF in us. Too many of us, me included, mustn’t have a clue of what that means, or we’d surely be using that power much more!

Let me read you David’s words to Goliath:

1 Sam 17:45-47

“Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, **the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand,** and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 Then all this assembly shall know that **the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hands.**”

We are to be strong “in the Lord, and in the power of HIS might” (Eph. 6:10).

In this Pentecost season, we have been given some of God’s very SPIRIT, HIS nature, HIS mind. But God’s spirit does not take over, unless we give God control of our lives. God is polite. He doesn’t make us listen to Him. We have to get still and quiet so we can hear the still, small signals from God. Christ knocks at the door; He doesn’t barge in (Rev. 3:20).

Jesus had said in John 15:5, after the Last Supper – Passover, “without me you can do nothing”. Paul puts it positively when he says, “I CAN do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

If Christ lives in us, we will be able to overcome temptations. We can beat the Devil. We can resist sins. We can be godly husbands and wives.

But as in all relationships, it changes minute by minute. We have to nurture this relationship. We may have let Christ live in us yesterday, but what about right now? Or maybe you failed 5 minutes ago.

You can go repent, and claim the victory right now – going forward. All relationships demand attention, and this one especially does.

“I am the LIFE”

John 14:6 “Jesus said to [Philip], “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

The Sequence in Christ

Notice the deliberate sequence here. God never says anything randomly. Have you noticed the depth of teaching in John 14:6? What Jesus says is life changing, when you grasp it.

- Jesus IS the way to God our Father, through Jesus’ torn body – represented by the torn veil of the temple when Jesus was ripped open by a Roman soldier’s spear. The early Christians were believers in “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9). The Life God wants us to live is a WAY of life. It is amazing how many times the Bible speaks of the “right way” and the “false way”.

Acts 19:23 “And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.”

Acts 24:14 “But this I confess to you, that *according to the Way which they call a sect*, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.”

I’ve been accused of being part of a sect. Well, Paul says I’m in good company.

- Once we accept Jesus, the way – He leads us into all truth. Remember Jesus told us the sequence: “I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE”. So first He shows us the Way. He is also the word of God. HE is the truth. What does truth do for us? God’s word, the truth, sets us free from all accusation, all condemnation, and all debt spiritually and it lights up the way, as well. Those in Christ keep His word (1 John 2:5). The truth of God’s word washes us, guides us and is important. Accepting doctrinal error is not something the Bible teaches! Look up “the truth” in a concordance and you’ll see what I mean. No doctrinal error, lies – can be called part of the truth (1 John 2:21).
- Only after embarking on the right and only Way, and then letting the light of truth guide us, then and only then, can we experience “THE LIFE”. This life is not the American Dream. “The Life” is not what I want, but what GOD wants in me and for me. It’s the life of Jesus living HIS perfect life in you and me again – when we let Him! Jesus is now our life, our hope of glory. We must now be like John the Baptist, who said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30). Until that happens, we are not really into “Life”. There is NO life apart from Christ. WITH Christ living in us, for the first time, we really can say we have come alive.
- This is a process that takes time. Paul realized this, and spoke of waiting “until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19), and we grow and mature over time. The more perfectly Jesus lives in us, the more perfectly we live, the less we sin. In fact, if we continue to live a life that hasn’t changed, if we don’t walk like Jesus walked, we can’t say we know Him (1 John 2:4-6). You see, Jesus hasn’t changed. He lived a perfect life while on the earth, and if he is allowed to live

actively in us – he will want to live that perfect life again. The problem is: we don’t LET His mind be in us enough.

Our life is Jesus’ life. Or should I say His life is now our life? Our strength comes from Him. We are rooted and grounded in Him. We are built up in Him. The end result is that we are “found in Him, not having our own righteousness from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Phil. 3:9). We become “the righteousness of God IN HIM (Christ)” (2 Cor. 5:21). He becomes, for us, God’s righteousness, God’s wisdom. Read that in 1 Cor. 1:29-31.

But the point is—the aim is to have Jesus be the life in our lives so completely, we have to mature, or as Christ put it, “become ye therefore perfect”, which is developing till we come to the fullness of the stature of Christ – as it says in Ephesians 4. As the bride of Christ, we are to become one with Him, in Him, as Adam and Eve started from one flesh and were to become and stay one flesh in spirit, love, in mind, in fact. A godly husband and wife relationship actually is to portray what the relationship should be between us and Christ (Eph. 5:31).

Are you Living Life Abundantly?

Do you feel you are living life in all its fullness? Or do we Christians not find in fact that we are SLOGGING through this life, more often than not – tackling depression, emotional issues, worries, barely able to pay the bills. Our health may be an issue. Our marriage, our child rearing, our finances, and our health – OK, let’s face it: for many of us, they’re nothing to brag about.

Reason? Because we don’t ALLOW Christ to live HIS life, without limitation, in us, and WE’RE trying to have the abundant life on our *own*! Here’s the low-down: we will experience more and more of God’s intended “abundant life” in all areas of our lives, especially spiritually, the more Jesus lives in us. HE had life abundant, and only in Him will we experience true living, true life. **

We KNOW we’re *supposed* to let Christ live in us, but many of us don’t see the evidence of it, don’t really believe it is happening right now. Even if we believe Christ is living in us, our lives don’t always evidence it. But we can change that if we begin to focus on this concept and WANT Christ to live in us.

I hope you don’t get overly discouraged if you don’t see Christ in your life like you should. We can grow in that and learn how to let Christ live more in us. Neither should we assume Christ IS living in us – if we aren’t wanting to change and overcoming. Those are just nominal Christians. Over time, we should know Christ is living in us because WE – and more importantly, others – see a 100% change in our lives. There is evidence of the complete and radical change that happens when Christ TRULY lives in you and me. They are experiencing the saving, the salvation of the Almighty right now. And – they’re living life more abundantly.

Gal. 2:20 is one of the best known ones on the topic of Christ living in us, but all through scripture, this concept of our life should be Jesus’ life and not our own – just pops up everywhere.

Paul, Peter and others use these phrases to convey what I’m talking about. Here are a few:

“Christ who is our life...” (Col. 3:4) – and he goes on to say IF that’s true, we don’t do the old things anymore. Why would Christ, if he’s LORD of our lives, live in sin? He wouldn’t. If Christ is in you, He will live in you the way He lived while walking the earth almost 2,000 years ago.

“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again, until Christ is formed in you” - Gal. 4:19
Ponder that. “Until Christ is formed in you”. This takes time.

Jesus Himself said, we must be born again or we cannot see the kingdom of God. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The birth anew in us is Christ being formed in us, and we become truly something that never existed before: brand new. God, who sees the end from the beginning, has already conveyed or “translated” us, in fact, to the Kingdom of His son (Col. 1:13). Though we are still flesh and blood, and we know flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom, we are not considered “IN” the flesh, but “in the spirit, if the spirit of God dwells in you” (Romans 8:9).

John 11:25 – Jesus called Himself “the resurrection and the life”. So HIS resurrection life is what must now be living inside us.

Our life is in Jesus -2 Tim. 1:1. He was what the Tree of Life represented in the midst of the paradise of God.

Paul called this a mystery that has now been revealed to the saints (**Col. 1:24-29**), and the mystery is **“Christ IN you, the HOPE OF GLORY” (v.27)**, and Paul continues, **“HIM we PREACH”**. This message about the kingdom IS also about its KING, hence Paul says, **“HIM we preach”**. But he goes on to say, **“that we may present every man perfect (mature) IN Christ”**, so he ends by saying in the end of Col 1 that he labors hard to let Christ be working mightily in him. It’s all God’s doing, through Christ in us. That’s what letting Christ live in us means. It’s truly HIS life, no longer ours. That’s why Paul says in Gal. 1:20 he no longer lives, but the life he lives is CHRIST in Him. The goal is full spiritual maturity – what Paul calls **“the perfect man, to the fullness of the stature of Christ”** – Eph. 4:13. He’s the standard. Nothing else. No one else.

WHY SHOULD we want Christ to Live in us? Why must He?

Why should we want Christ to live in us – instead of ourselves leading the way? Perhaps you may want to pause for a few minutes and write down why YOU think you would want Christ to live in you. Perhaps discuss it first among your group, then come back to the sermon in 5 minutes. **“WHY should we want Christ to live in us”?**

- If Christ doesn’t live in me, I have no life now, nor in the future. Because Jesus has risen, and lives in me, I have confidence I will be in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:15-22). HE is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Because He lives in you and me, **we DO have life** now and in future.
- Because Christ lives in me by His Spirit, I can claim victory over self, the world, and sin. We are engaged in the fight of our lives, and I want HIS victory for me, which I can have through faith in Him. See 1 John 5:4; John 16:33; 1 Cor. 15:57; Rev. 12:11- we defeat Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the testimony of God’s word.
- With Christ in me, I am sealed by the Spirit. Having God’s spirit pours out the love of God into my life (Rom. 5:5) and gives me HIS mind, His power – everything that is Jesus.

- If Christ lives in me, I will **have HIS mind**, God's mind. HIS way of life affecting me. I can't just copy Jesus' mind, but I have to let His mind be in me (Phil. 2:5). My mind needs to be cleansed, needs to be renewed, transformed. Only in Christ will that happen over time.
- I want Jesus to live in me because it is not in me to direct my own steps. I don't know how to live like God -- as much as God knows how to live like God. Since Jesus is God, and since Jesus perfectly modeled perfect spiritual maturity – I'll gladly invite Him into my life and ask Him to teach me how to grow up in Him, “to the fullness of the stature of Christ”, until “Christ is formed in me” (Gal. 4:19).
- I want Christ to live in me because it is only HIS righteousness that is perfect or can save me (Phil. 3:6-9). I covered that in depth in earlier sermons about God's righteousness.
- I want Christ to live in me because I want Him to speak to me, cleanse me, and teach me. We are cleansed by the word

Ps 119:9-11 “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. 10 With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! 11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”

Sure that includes doing Bible study, which is the word of God also. But Jesus was the WORD (John 1:1-3,14) and when HE lives in us, God's word IS in us. (Eph. 5:26). When Jesus comes into our lives, our inward parts are washed, and He speaks to us. He has not gone mute. He doesn't just speak by the words in the Bible. When He comes into us, He will talk to you if you will quiet down and listen!

- I want Jesus to live in me because when I pray – God the Father sees the perfect Jesus, hears the perfect Jesus, and I can approach God's holy throne boldly because of Jesus, through Jesus
- I want Christ to live in me because only then will people really see Christ in me! I can try to just COPY Him, but I'll always fall short. Only Christ in me, can be Christ's life.

Those are just a few reasons. You may have many more that I didn't mention.

Now we have to let the Spirit GROW in us, and that will be for another sermon. But we either use it or lose it. Remember the parable of the Pounds? We'll talk more on that aspect later.

HOW does Jesus come into our lives? DO you know?

God starts the process. I've covered this before, but we must cover this part again, because people complain about sermons in general and say, “good points, but you never said HOW”.

Evangelists make it sound so simple. Just ask Jesus into your heart, they say. And yet you won't find scriptures that say “ask Jesus into your heart”. What scripture does say is this:

- God calls us and opens us our minds and leads us to repentance. **We have to ASK** for forgiveness, and go to God through Christ (John 14:6). Then we ask for Jesus to come into our hearts and lives. YES, Jesus does come into our hearts. Ephesians 3:17 says “...that Christ may

dwell in your hearts through faith”. Faith -- again, and again. Galatians 4:6 says God sends us the Spirit of His Son into our hearts by which we can cry out ‘Abba, Father’. There are more.

- When we answer, we do the big swap. We confess our sins and give them up, choosing now to accept Jesus as our King, Master and savior and make a public confession that we will now obey Him and our lives will be different. We love Him more than parents, wife, husband, children, or friends. In fact Peter says the world thinks it’s strange that we don’t do the old things
- We are baptized by immersion under water, picturing the death of the self, and come up a new man or woman in Christ, and then have a man of God lay his hands on your head and ask for God to give you His Nature, His Spirit—and that your body becomes the body temple of God's dwelling. Wow! There can be no resurrection of Christ in us until there has been a death. There can be no new life, until there has been a surrender of the old life we have.
- Now comes another difficult step: believing. Really believing this has happened. Faith. Trust. Not doubting that God has forgiven, has accepted you, and has made you whole and clean, and has granted you His nature, His spirit, His thoughts, His mind, His Power – and has come to live inside of you.
- Then another hard step: Living like it’s already yours. Living like it has already all happened. That is receiving. Behaving like you really believe Jesus is in fact in you. Ask and you shall receive – IF you believe with all your heart. Believe first – then you see it. If you wait until you see Jesus living in you before you believe it, you won’t ever see it. Believe first – then you’ll see it.
- At that point – study the scriptures if you doubt me – we can say we are saved. Scripture is clear: it discusses all stages of salvation. It says we “have been saved” (Eph 2:5,8; Titus 3:5; Rom. 8:24) through Christ already, even now. Ephesians 2:5 and 8 say, “...by grace you *have been saved*”. Other scriptures say the same. Embrace it. If we abide in Christ, it’s DONE. Praise GOD, who has given us the victory. Paul says we have already been transferred into the kingdom of His Son (Col. 1:13).
 - Scripture also talks about those who are “being saved” (1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15)
 - Scripture also clearly discusses that we have to endure to be saved. It uses the phrase “shall be saved” if we endure to the end (Matt. 24:13; 1 Cor. 3:15; Rom. 5:10; 1 Cor. 15:2).All three stages: have been saved, are being saved, and shall be saved. If we hang in there with God, we’ll be saved in the end, but the process has already started, and God sees the end from the beginning and in Eph 2:8 says we *have been saved*.
- So we believe he has come into our lives – at first perhaps as a small seed. But we don’t believe! Why? Because we still find ourselves doing the old things from time to time. We still find our old thoughts still there. We still find sin, horrible sins, cropping up from time to time. So did Abraham, David, Moses. We still doubt, from time to time. So did John the Baptist – “are you the one to come?” Remember?

- We give God time to let His nature grow in us and believe it is happening. Like a seed in the ground. After a few days or weeks, you can think “this isn’t working” and walk away. But had you believed, and watered it, and been patient, you would have seen in time that the seed of God’s nature would sprout and someday develop into a mighty tree – if you can understand my analogy. That’s Jesus in you. But stay the course. Paul labored “UNTIL Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). We have been predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son of God (Romans 8:29). That’s what it says, folks!

I will talk more about the how in a coming sermon on Living by the faith of Jesus.

Now brethren, since we still have lots of human carnal nature at the same time we still have God’s nature, don’t confuse the fact that you still sin – as Paul clearly says He still did – with the fact that you have Christ in you! It’s just that we’re not learning and using Christ in us as fully as we should, as consistently as we should. We’re not learning to let Him grow.

Remember what John the baptizer said about Jesus is what all of us must say as we come face to face to Jesus: “he must increase, but I must decrease”. We will decrease, if we do first things first. What’s mentioned first? “He must increase”. (John 3:30).

That’s what Paul meant when He uses the phrase “until Christ is formed in you”, and later, “Until we come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”.

He wants to do it again – this time reliving His life in you.

Remember – to God, HIS church – which is about to marry His Son Jesus – is the most beautiful thing in the whole creation! If you are “in Christ”, do you see yourself that way now? That God sees you as part of the beautiful bride about to marry King Jesus? God is trying to get your attention! If you’re in New York, Washington, Kenya or Australia or wherever – you are beautiful to God.

GOD is saying this to you: “hey, I haven’t given up on you! And I don’t ever intend to! You’re my personal miracle and I don’t quit halfway through a project. You’ve been a project, alright, but we’ll get this done – if you will just trust and obey me, and accept my Son as your king, master, your new life, and your Savior. Will you? As God Almighty, I’m starting a godly family. I want to take you as my very own son – or my very own daughter. Will you take me as your Father? Will you accept my offer to hand you the universe – and take my Son as your new life?”

That’s what God is saying to you – yes, you – right now. You and I – with all our wrinkles, all our baggage. He says, “I have a swap for you: give me your garbage – all your sins, all your worries, all your fears, your past, all your failures and all your own accomplishments – and I have a swap for you: I will credit to your account the life and success and future of my son, the coming King of the earth. And He and I will come reside in you. You will become the body temple of my Spirit. And I will finish what I’ve started in you – on one condition: Start believing this. Trust me. Come to me. Stay with me. And don’t deny Me.”

Start seeing. Start believing. And then start experiencing God’s miracles.

I still sin, sometimes still pretty badly too. I can still lust. I can still lose my temper. I can still worry. I can still get depressed. I can still do bad things and be bad, way too often, even as the apostle Paul

admitted, “that which I hate, I do”. And if you were watching me while I was doing something I hated, you’d conclude I couldn’t be converted. Just as you and I might have had to conclude David couldn’t be very converted as he ripped apart Uriah’s marriage, then even murdered Uriah and the men with him, to cover up a sin. But David was converted, but conversion is both instant, and is a process.

That’s the nature of this war. There are 2 natures now in us: God's nature, and our old human nature. Sometimes we feed God's nature more – and it becomes stronger in us. Sometimes we starve God's nature by not praying, fasting, studying and meditating on God's word - - and our old nature gets stronger. It’s almost like radio station band widths. Which one do you listen to? Which one are you tuned in to? If we want to win, we have to do it by turning to God, tuning in to HIS mind, HIS way, and fighting sin.

We can’t be playing in Satan’s back yard either. We think we can play in Satan’s playgrounds and come out unscathed. What do I mean? I’m referring to his playgrounds of drinking, of internet so-called ‘harmless websites’, flirting with other people’s spouses on the job, gambling – oh, we think it’s just a little lottery fun. We play around with God's holy Sabbath. We play around by getting so busy we don’t pray or study. We play in Satan’s playgrounds by daydreaming thoughts we shouldn’t be daydreaming – whether of greed, lust, infidelity, anger, holding grudges, sexual fantasies – you name it, Satan knows how to lure us away from God-- until bam! -- he has us trapped tightly in his grip and we’re away from God.

We’ve lost some ground, but with our commander in Chief, we can fight and reclaim the ground.

So let Christ live in you. Seek him first and foremost. Begin each day in prayer and devotional study. When you fail and sin badly, get back to God on your knees and ask forgiveness. Get back in the fight. He will fight for you. God bought you with a price and will finish what He’s started in you.

Isn’t God beautiful? Jesus is Wonderful. He’s the Mighty living God. Prince of Peace, Son of God – and now God is in you – and He wants to shine as He lives in you. Let Him shine from you. And then be prepared to step back in awesome worship of what you see God doing.

But we first believe – *then* we experience the glories of God. God says: “Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [you worry about] will be taken care of! Don’t worry. That’s what pagans and Gentiles do. But not my children, for I am a great Father, the master and creator of all things. Nothing is too great for me. And I love giving good gifts. In fact every good thing ultimately is from my hands.”

Carole and I were talking about this and here’s what my college sweetheart (my wife) said:

“Instead of being regretful of the weaknesses that have created problems for us and others we should rather be glad that if we commit them all to God in faith, He will be glorified by those very weaknesses. There is nothing God cannot turn to his glory (unless we prevent it by doubt). If it seems like those with the most talents also have the greatest weaknesses, then they can also have the most joy because they will bring God the greatest glory. For example, I think people tend to glorify Paul too much without realizing that he probably was in his natural state a despicable man (one who persecuted Christians to the death. What kind of person does that?). Everything Paul did after his conversion, everything he wrote, every great accomplishment – was really God's doing.”

All things are in HIS time, HIS way. God makes all things beautiful in HIS time. Believe that. Bring Him your life. And then let God turn your life into a thing of beauty as His spirit molds and refashions you. In the end, guess what? God wins. And we stand before Him singing His praises, from the sea of Glass before His throne. Spotless, beautiful, without fault or spiritual wrinkle, the Bride of Christ. We just have to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift us up – in His time and His way.

Wow. Do you believe?

So here’s the point: ***God has already empowered us. We just don’t believe it yet, therefore we don’t see it yet. We don’t believe it yet, because all we see is our own long list of never-ending trials, troubles and lots of sins still.***

We have to remember God is preparing His temple. We’re the stones in that temple. The holy stones that were used in the temple were chipped away at the quarry, and all the work was done off site. It was a noisy, dirty, sandy, painful place. But when Solomon’s temple came together, there wasn’t so much as the noise of a chisel or hammer. The finished stones, when they were assembled together, were a thing of exquisite beauty. The beauty of the spiritual temple – the church – will be far more glorious than the former temple. All the verses that the latter temple will be more glorious than the former temple were really referring to God’s temple, the church – not the temple the Jews want to build. But, just like the physical temple, the quarry – here on earth – is a messy, dirty, noisy, painful place. It’s only when the finished, polished, perfected stones are brought together that the glory of God will shine from that finished temple. But you can begin to let Christ shine in you now if you let your individual stone become more and more a finished work of God’s spirit in you.

His greatest work in you is yet to be seen.

In our weakness, we let HIS strength shine – because we’re letting the Spirit work in us.

In our failures, we let HIS success win out in the end.

In our losses, we let HIS victory be the end result.

When we’re weak, HE is strong in us, and so WE are strong even when we are weak.

Another thought: Does God have anything more for you on this earth? ** I think this: if you’re still alive, God’s not done with you yet and you still have things to do on this earth. Ponder that!

But the believing comes before the seeing. We usually have it backwards: we say – “I’ll believe it when I see it”, but that is precisely why we don’t see God’s great power much more: we’re waiting-doubtfully at that – instead of believing we already have what He’s promised. Believe and you will experience the power of the risen Christ, the son of God, living in you.

In the sermon coming soon, I’m going to talk about living by the faith OF Jesus – and what power that should give us.

If these messages are helping you – share this website with others. I don’t need to know. Just help others hear God’s word as well. God bless you brothers and sisters, wherever you are in the USA, Canada, Australia, Kenya, South Africa, wherever you are. God’s spirit be with you, as you let Christ Live in you.

