Christ In You?

 Can Christ actually live His life through His people? What does “*Christ in you the hope of glory*” mean? What does Christ in you mean? Consider the answer of the young boy who was asked if he wanted to invite Christ in live inside him. The boy seemed hesitant and when his pastor asked him why he was reluctant, the boy replied, “Well He’s so big and I’m so small; if He comes in there won’t be any room left for me.” (Out of mouth of babes.) Besides the profound message and very relevant lesson for all of us from that story, it is clear that the boy thought that Jesus Christ, the person in the carpenter’s body was going to somehow enter his small frame. We smile at the boy’s misunderstanding but the question remains: what does it mean that Christ is in me?

 We know that His “Bethlehem body” is not in me but surely He is in me in a very real way. Clearly what is in view in that verse is that His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is He in me. Question: is He in me simply as an observer? Does He have a clipboard in His hand keeping track of my good works and my selfish deeds? As He watches me does He pat me on the back when I do well and show His displeasure in me when I fail? Or perhaps He is taking the role of a heavenly cheerleader. “Fight the devil, fight the devil, harder, harder.” Does He do a back flip when I do well and reward me with His smile and answered prayers? Does He hang His head and shake His head back and forth when I fail? Is he disgusted at my repeated failures? Does He spend most of His time rolling His eyes as He watches my many shortcomings? Listen to me carefully: Many of these thoughts are in some fashion written in the Old Testament, **but none of them are in the new testament.** If you are a Christian reading this article then you are a New Testament, and yet many of us are sincerely but mistakenly trying to live an Old Testament life. It was essentially a failure for our ancient brothers and it is an epic failure for us. The New testament has messages like this: “*There is therefore now no condemnation* …” “*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*” (There again is that phrase, the glory of God. Lord willing we will get to that phrase in this article.) “*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*” “*just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.*” We are holy and without blame in His eyes and we have been completely accepted in the beloved. We are not called to earn acceptance but to believe that we are accepted. It is the ultimate picture of pride for us to think that we **can** earn His acceptance and the height of futility for us to **try**. Let me make this as clear as possible, Christ is not an observer or a cheerleader, He was, is, and always will be King of kings and Lord of lords. He is in us to reign. Yes He is pleased when we manifest God’s likeness, but the truth is that we do not possess the ability in ourselves to do that. It is only as we submit, surrender, and yield to His life in us that anything of eternal value will be accomplished through us.

 I am not saying that our manner of life is not important. Consider these words: “*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.*” What I am saying is that we do not have what it takes to walk worthy if we rely on our power, our wisdom, and our strength. {WARNING: I am about to say something very controversial which may offend some readers. Proceed at your own risk.} I am also saying that my Father is pleased with me every moment of everyday, even when I am not conscious at all of His presence or His will. He is pleased with me not because of anything I have done, am doing, or will do; but solely and completely because of what His Son did on the cross. We are accepted in the beloved.

 Now let’s return to this glory idea. How is it that Christ being in me leads to glory? What is that glory? Is that glory only found in heaven? Does the bible use the term “glory” simply as a synonym for the term heaven? Does that verse have any relevance to our lives in the here and now? Let’s consider the way the word glory is used in scripture. *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,”* Heb. 1:1-3 Here we see an excellent definition of glory: the image of God. Certainly there is little if any glory, image of God, found in man. Is there any glory, God’s likeness, found in the church? There are songs and sermons about glory in the church, but is there any glory? Since the glory of God is defined by most biblical teachers as God’s likeness, the question becomes: is God’s likeness seen in us who are consistently found in church. Do we manifest God’s image routinely by the life we live? Now we begin to see the meaning of this phrase, “*Christ in you the hope of glory.*” That verse is not saying that Christ in us is our only hope of heaven, although that is true, but it is stating a fundamental foundational truth for the church, that our only hope of showing forth God’s likeness and manifesting the very image of the divine in our mortal flesh lies solely and completely in the wonderful presence of our Lord and Savior in our lives. It is His work in us that is the key not our work for Him.

 That image was seen in the apostles and the early church. “*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*” Acts 4:13. Perhaps our problem today is that we are very learned and very smart. Maybe we are too smart to sense our need for God’s power, indeed His very life in and through us. In Acts 3:12 we find Peter’s response to the people’s praise directed toward Peter after the lame man was healed. “*So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?*” Clearly Peter, indeed the early church, did not depend on their own power or their good deeds. Do we? I am saying that the bible teaches us that God has and does perform His work through very imperfect vessels who are totally dependent and yielded to Him.

 What did Paul mean by the phrase, “*it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;*”? It seems to me that today our answer is to this question is, “Well I don’t know what Paul meant nor do I understand the reality of Christ’s presence in me; so I’ll just do the best I can to be a good Christian.” But what if, in fact, you can’t be a good Christian apart from His life flowing through you. The teaching of scripture is clear though rarely understood, and that teaching is that we, as born again, heaven bound, genuinely saved people, have, by virtue of our salvation, a new heart that desires to follow God; we however, in ourselves, do not possess the ability to do what our new heart wants to do. The church today is in great need of sound theological teaching about many things and not the least of those is Rom. Chapter 7. There we find such startling revelations as this: “*For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills [wants] to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*” Paul was stating in stark honesty the truth about our state as Christians. When God saved us He placed within us the power over sin, but that power is contained totally in Christ and only as we allow His life to dominate our life will that power be actually visible in our lives. As long as we ignore the life of Christ within us we are doomed to a life of futile religious effort. Although we are assured a home in heaven we of little use to man or God down here. The gospel is not a story of how to get to heaven but how to have an entirely different kind of life. Heaven is wonderfully true but it is not the major emphasis of the biblical teaching concerning the gospel.

 In Gal. we find these thoughts: “*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different* ***gospel****, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the* ***gospel*** *of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the* ***gospel*** *which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the* ***gospel***”. Clearly Paul was discussing the gospel and how the message of the gospel was being altered by some teachers. When Paul comes to the main point of his argument he sates this: “*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*” The issue he is bringing to the forefront is not how to get to heaven but how to life the Christian life. The false teaching that he was opposing had to do with an elevation of religious, (Old Testament), works over being led by the Spirit without regard to Old Testament rules. {WARNING: I am again about to say something very controversial which may offend some readers. Proceed at your own risk.} My point is that the gospel speaks primarily to this life not the afterlife. Consider this Gal. passage, “*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the* ***gospel*** *to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*” The message of the gospel is mainly concerned with the receiving the Spirit of God. In today’s world we are looking only at the eternal consequences of having the Spirit, and almost completely ignoring the present day implications of Christ being alive in us, which is the emphasis of scripture. I am not saying that heaven is not real; of course it is and it will be more wonderful than any of us can now imagine. What I am saying is the major emphasis of the gospel is not the by and by but the here and now. Some preacher once said, “Heaven is icing on the cake.” We have in our modern educated wisdom created a gospel message that is all icing. This has been done by sincere desire to save the lost, but it is not the message of scripture.

 At the end of Peter’s Pentecostal sermon he said, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” In our speech and teachings we are in essence rewriting this verse to say, “… and you shall receive a home in heaven.” We are trying to rewrite the Bible. It will not work, and it will not be blessed by God. When we ignore the purpose for the Spirit’s presence within us we are left with lifeless and fruitless works of the law, with the idea that our compliance to religious rules is equivalent to being a good Christian. Jesus told us that, “*Out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water.*” What else could those rivers be but the daily outflow of the very life of Christ. Christ died for us that He might live in us; this is the clear teaching of scripture.

 The flow of Christ’s life through us is not magical, mindless, robot like behavior. When the Spirit flowed through Peter in the Pentecostal sermon Peter was not in a comma. He was actively involved with his whole heart and mind. It is indeed a mystery, this thing called being filled with the Spirit. There are, however at least two things we know. (1) The rivers do not flow automatically. Our part is to step out in faith, believing against all evidence to the contrary that Christ will actually live His life through us. (2) Being continually filled with the spirit is a command, not an “Option B” intended only for those who have opted for the fanatical Christian life; and that the command does not apply to those who have opted for the nominal, laid back, and barely involved Christian life. As you seek to be obedient and to be a vessel through which His life flows, consider the following prayer: “Dear heavenly Father, your word teaches us that your Son ascended bodily into heaven; therefore His hands are there, but my hands are right here on earth in the midst of a lost world, so Father use my hands today. I offer them to you for your use. Touch someone today through my hands. May the life of your precious Son flow through my hands this day. His eyes are there in heaven but my eyes are here. Father use my eyes today. Give me your wisdom as I view this life. Allow me to see where you desire to touch people today. Use my mouth today. Speak through me. Guide me, empower me, use me to speak words of truth to a world desperately seeking to move away from you. I freely confess my own inability to accomplish anything of eternal value in my own strength, but I believe in you, I believe in your Son, and I believe that even someone as weak and unimpressive as me can be used by you to accomplish your work in this world. Thank you Father for the unspeakable gift of your life in me, and thank you for this day and the opportunity for the life of your Son to be alive in and flowing through me today. I say no to me today that I might say yes to you.” “… *always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*” II Cor. 4:10

 I thank you for tour kind attention. I do not claim to have all the answers nor to have perfectly applied these truths. It does my heart good to speak/write these thoughts. My heart, and I believe also the Holy Spirit, tell me that this article is true and needed for the church today. Please pray about these concepts and search the scriptures to determine what you believe. If you desire to communicate with me I can be reached at 903-360-8524 or you can email me at jwchristnu@gmail.com and if you are a glutton for punishment and want to read more similar articles, go to [www.revival777.yolasite.com](http://www.revival777.yolasite.com) May God bless you in your service to and through our Lord.

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