

Christ In Us

A brief summary of the meaning of Christianity

This is a transcription adapted from an audio message by David A. DePra.

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By David A. DePra

I want to start today's message by asking a question. And this question that I am going to ask is probably the most basic, foundational, and fundamental question that could be asked in a Christian church. That question is this: What IS Christianity? That is pretty foundational, isn't it? And today, during this message, I hope to answer that question.

I am going to cut to the quick before we look into the Bible, and I'm going to answer that question outright. Certainly, we could come up with numerous answers to that question, "What is Christianity?" But we are going to discover today that at the core that Christianity really is, "Christ in us, the hope of glory."

Christ In You

If you look up the term, "Christian," in the Bible, you will not find it in there very much – it is actually there three times – the word, "Christian." And if you look up the New Testament Greek behind that word that is translated, "Christian," it is interesting. The word, "Christian," in New

Testament Greek means, “a Christ-one.” Or, to put it another way, it means, “one who is OF Christ.” So right away we get a little bit of a clue that if you are a, “Christian,” you are one who is, “of Christ;” you are one who is, “in Christ,” or more along the title for today, you are, “one in whom Christ dwells.” Christianity is, “Christ in us,” or as Paul often puts it, a Christian is one who is, “in Christ.”

Now I want to turn to Colossians 1. Colossians 1 contains a very important passage. I want to start reading in Colossians 1:25. Paul is talking about his ministry, and he is saying that his ministry was given to him by God – and of course all ministry that is OF God is given BY God. If my ministry hasn’t been given to me by God then I have a big problem – because then you have to ask the question, “Where did I get it?” But Paul got his ministry from God. And he is talking about that in this chapter – and he says in verse 24 that this ministry that he has been given is unto the Body of Christ. Then in verse 25 he says, “(Unto the Body) I am made a minister, according to the dispensation which is given to me for you, TO FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD.”

Now, before I go on, notice the immensity of this statement here in verse 25 – it is really easy to miss. Paul is saying that

the ministry that God has given to him for the Body of Christ FULFILLS THE WORD OF GOD. That statement is really easy to race past, but it is an IMMENSE statement. It is an immense statement to say that any ministry – but by extension this applies to all ministry that proclaims this Truth – it is an immense statement to say that ministry FULFILLS THE WORD OF GOD. How many understand that if a ministry is fulfilling the Word of God that it, “ministers,” that which will fulfill the purpose of God? It is, “ministering” – preaching, revealing, living – that which will fulfill everything that God has said, going all the way back to the book of Genesis. If we, as a church, or the Body of Christ, or an individual person – have a ministry – and if that ministry is FULFILLING the Word of God -- then it is in the center of the will of God. It is doing God’s will. It is being used by God to bring to pass God’s purpose. And so whatever Paul is about to share, he says was given to him to FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD. Let’s read on here and find out what that is – let’s find out what FULFILLS THE WORD OF GOD.

He calls this, “word,” that he has been given, “the mystery.” (verse 26) First, a little bit of definition. Today, when we think of the word, “mystery,” we think that it refers to something, “mysterious;” we

think that it is something HIDDEN that no one can figure out. But in those days, and in the original language, the word, “mystery,” does not mean that. The word, “mystery,” actually means, yes, something that WAS hidden, but NOW is being revealed. And this is exactly what Paul says here in verse 26. He says that this ministry that God gave him to fulfill the Word of God is a MYSTERY – which HAD been hidden from ages and generations past, but NOW – in Paul’s time – is made manifest to the saints.

So again – this great mystery fulfills the Word of God – a great mystery that was hidden from ages and generations past. How many understand that although it is absolutely correct to say that Jesus Christ is all through the Old Testament – Jesus Christ is revealed all through the Old Testament – but that much of that OT revelation is there in type and shadow? It is veiled – if we could say it that way. In fact, if you wanted to give a definition and contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, one way to say it would be that the Old Covenant is a type and a shadow of Jesus Christ, but the New Covenant is the reality of Christ Himself – and even more than that – the New Covenant is CHRIST IN US, the hope of glory. All through the OT we find Christ – Christ is in the tabernacle; Christ is in the

Levitical priesthood; Christ is in the offerings; Christ is in the Holy Days; Christ is in all of the rituals that God had the priests do in the Old Testament – EVERYTHING speaks of Jesus Christ, His Redemption, and the relationship that believers are to have with Him -- but in type and shadow. In the New Testament, however, it is no longer type and shadow. It is the reality of the Living Christ Himself – dwelling in His people. And that is the difference.

Paul is alluding to that here. He is saying that this great MYSTERY which had been hidden from ages and generations past – even in the OT it was hidden, let alone to the rest of the world who did not have the OT -- he says BUT NOW this great mystery that fulfills the Word of God is being made manifest to the saints. And what is this great mystery that is NOW being revealed – the mystery that fulfills completely the Word of God? Paul tells us in verse 27. He says, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

“Christ in us” – Jesus Christ dwelling in His people is the complete fulfillment of the Word of God. “Christ in us,” is Christianity at the core. Now, we could talk a lot about how you become a Christian; how Christ comes to be in you – repentance and coming to the Cross.

That's part of Christianity. But how to be saved is not within the scope of this message. And certainly we are going to talk about the impact or outcome of, "Christ in you," which is the Christian life – and onward unto the eternal ages. But at the core, Christianity is, "Christ in you."

How many understand that if I do not have Christ in me, I'm not a Christian? But if I do have Christ in me then I am a Christian. Church membership has nothing to do with it. Whether I am a Christian or not depends upon whether the Living Christ is in me.

Joined to the Lord

The next question is: How does Christ dwell in us? What does that really mean?

If you would go to the doctors and get an x-ray, you would not see Jesus on that image. If you went and got an MRI you would not see Him on that image either – even though it is a much better image. No. Jesus Christ is united with us in SPIRIT. That is how Christ dwells in the believer.

I Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." That word translated, "joined," in the NT Greek actually means, "glued," or, "cemented."

So we are talking about being JOINED to the Lord and being made ONE with Him in SPIRIT. That is how Christ dwells in us and we are in Christ. It is a spiritual union. Somebody one called it, "resurrection union." That is absolutely a fact.

When you think about this spiritual union that we have in Christ, it ought to bring to mind a whole bunch of NT passages – because this Truth is all through the NT. For example, there is Galatians 2:20, where Paul said, "I am crucified WITH Christ." How many understand that Paul was perfectly aware that Jesus Christ died FOR him? We know that Jesus Christ died on the Cross as our substitute – and without that we have nothing. That is a foundation of Christian Truth. But – Paul did not say that here. He says that other places. Here in Galatians 2:20, Paul says, "Yes, Jesus Christ was crucified FOR me. But because Jesus was crucified FOR me, I am now crucified WITH Christ." Again – how many understand that this is a UNION? That is a JOINING. That is an ONENESS with Jesus Christ.

How many understand that this is more than doctrine? The doctrine states the Truth about this and it needs to do so. How many understand that all of our New Testament doctrine needs to be Biblical.

It has to be in the Bible or it is not the Truth. But how many also understand that I could be a walking encyclopedia of Christian doctrine and yet not even be saved? For I am not saved by memorizing doctrine. I am saved only if Christ is in me. And so what we are talking about here is a living oneness with the Risen Christ. We are not only united with Him in His death, but we are likewise united with Him in spirit.

Romans 6 states this wonderfully – behind which is this Truth of, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Romans 6:3 – notice the oneness in spirit that Paul mentions here – he says, “Don’t you know that so many of us that were baptized INTO Jesus Christ were baptized INTO His death?” He says, “Therefore we are buried WITH Him by a baptism INTO His death, that like as Christ was raised up from the death by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.” And then in Romans 6:5, he says, “If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.” Again – the NT Greek – “planted together,” means, “to be engrafted into.” If you know anything about agriculture, you know that there are people who have learned to ENGRAFT into growing, living plants or trees, branches that could not live and grow otherwise. And so Paul is saying

that as believers, when we come to Jesus Christ, Jesus JOINS us to Himself – He makes us one with Himself in spirit – and we are engrafted INTO Him; into His death and resurrection. This is why we are SAVED.

You and I should not only be grateful for Jesus Christ because He died on the Cross as our substitute – and we should likewise be grateful because He was raised from the dead for us – but the very essence of Christianity is that we have been crucified WITH Him; and we are raised IN Him. This is what newness of life IS – and it is what happens when Jesus Christ comes to dwell in us. And so we are joined to the Lord and we are made one spirit with Him.

A New Birth

Now, when we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him, something happens. And what happens is: A NEW BIRTH. When we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him – and that one spirit is the Spirit of God – that joining in spirit births the NEW MAN in Jesus Christ. It is the birth of the NEW CREATION.

Paul says in II Cor. 5:17, “If any man is IN Christ...” – there it is again, “Christ in you;

you in Christ” – “If any man is IN Christ he is a NEW creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become NEW.” And then the first phrase of the next verse says, “And all things are OUT FROM God” – speaking of that new creation in which we are born.

Body, Soul, and Spirit

I mentioned earlier that if you went and got an x-ray that you would not see Jesus Christ on the image because we are joined to Christ in spirit. Therefore, there is a distinction here that we need to make that is so very important to our understanding of how to walk with God; how God works; and what Christianity is: We are joined to the Lord and made one with Him in SPIRIT. But we are NOT made one with the Lord – in this age – with our body. And we are not made one with the Lord in our soul.

There are two components of man's EARTHLY nature. One of them is SOUL, and one of them is BODY. The soul is that part of man's earthly nature that you cannot see, and the body is that part that you can see. We are not joined to the Lord and made one body with Him physically in this age. The human body is NOT saved in this age. That is easy to prove – simply go home and look in the

mirror. Every day that I look in the mirror I see that I am getting older. If you were joined to the Lord in body, you would be eternally alive physically. You would have a resurrected body. But we don't have that – we get older everyday; you and I are capable of getting sick. And so we are not yet resurrected with glorified bodies. Neither is our soul yet resurrected. But our spirit IS resurrected in Christ.

Human beings have three dimensions: Spirit, soul, and body. We are united with the Lord only in SPIRIT. But in this age, God desires that our soul and body be progressively brought under the government of Jesus Christ in us – with whom we are united in spirit. That is where obedience and sanctification come in. So it is very important to see the distinction between being united with the Lord in SPIRIT rather than SOUL or BODY.

We have talked about our body not being united with the Lord – how about the SOUL? If I were to ask, “How many of you have emotions that work perfectly?” No one would raise his or her hand. Yet your emotions are part of your SOUL. Your emotions do not work perfectly. Does your MIND work perfectly? No. But the mind is to be renewed – and come under the influence of our spiritual union with Jesus

Christ – the mind will be renewed as we grow to know Jesus Christ. But all of that being said, the core of it all is union with Christ in SPIRIT – which is, “Christ in us, the hope of glory.”

What I have just described – being united with the Lord in spirit verses not being united with Him in body or soul – that is what the Bible refers to as, “the separation between soul and spirit.” Each believer is a new creature in Christ – because we are joined to the Lord and one SPIRIT with Him. But each believer also continues to carry the old nature – the body and soul -- that are NOT united with the Lord. Each believer carries BOTH -- the old and the new.

For example, when I react emotionally, or think naturally – that is not necessarily of Christ – it may be, “just me.” That may be my SOUL; my natural man. My union with Christ is, “other than that” – I am united with Him in SPIRIT. Thus, I need to learn Christ – to live from out of my fellowship with Him.

And so Christianity is, “Christ in us, the hope of glory.” We are, “joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him.” This union is the CORE of salvation.

I like to use this example to illustrate the separation IN EACH BELIEVER between soul and spirit – the separation between our spiritual union with Christ and our soul and body: If I could take an imaginary pencil and draw a circle around my spiritual union with Christ – of course, I cannot really do this; it is just an illustration – but if I could draw a circle around my spiritual union with Jesus Christ, everything INSIDE of that circle would be eternal. Everything INSIDE of that circle would be of the new creation in Jesus Christ. Everything INSIDE of that circle would be LIFE and TRUTH – the source being the Person of Christ with whom I am joined in spirit. But everything that is OUTSIDE of that circle; OUTSIDE of my spiritual union with Christ, would be those dimensions of my human makeup that remain NATURAL in this age – i.e., my body and soul. And so there you have the separation of soul and spirit in each believer.

This separation in each believer of soul verses spirit also accounts for the great conflict that Paul mentions so often in his epistles. He teaches that the FLESH is against the SPIRIT – and that the two are contrary one to the other. Much of what God wants us to learn is the distinction between the two, and frankly, there is only one way to know the distinction between

soul and spirit: We have to know HIM. All discernment in the Christian life is the by-product of knowing Jesus Christ.

When government agents are trained to spot counterfeit currency, they are not trained by merely studying counterfeit bills. There is, of course, some of that. But you would never get to the end of the possibilities. Rather, the primary way in which government agents are trained to spot counterfeit bills is by learning the real thing. For if you know the real thing -- you will know what is NOT the real thing. Therefore, the more we know Jesus in spirit and in Truth, the more we will be able to spot what is NOT of Him. And that is the key to everything – including the ability to discern even in ourselves the difference between what is of God, and what is of US.

Jesus Christ is ALL

So we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him, but what that really means is in Christ we have received ALL – we have received ALL that God Almighty has to give. How many understand that God has wrapped up everything that He has to give to humanity in His Son? Romans 8:32 says it outright: “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him

up for us all – how shall He not with Him freely give us ALL things?”

There is a reason why, throughout the gospel of John, Jesus continually said, “I AM....” Have you noticed that? I think there are NINE places in the gospel of John where Jesus said, “I AM....” – “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;” “I am the Resurrection and the Life;” “I am the Bread of Life;” “I am the Door;” “I am the Good Shepherd,” and I could go on – “I AM....I AM...I AM.....” How many understand that this speaks of who Jesus is TO US? – right NOW -- in His relationship with us? HE IS those things TO US. HE IS our life, our Truth, our Way, and our Resurrection. In other words, Jesus is not up in heaven somewhere – not someone who is hard to reach. No. This is the Jesus to whom we are joined -- we are made one with Him in spirit. And God has given everything He has to give to humanity in His Son to whom we are joined. This is why Paul was able to say in Colossians 2:10: “You are complete in Him.”

Another important point of clarification in the Christian life, once we understand that God has given us all things freely IN Christ, is that at salvation we receive ALL of Christ. We do not receive, “pieces of Christ,” at salvation. I would be wasting

my time and energy asking God, “to give me MORE of Jesus.” There is no more of Jesus TO give me if I have been saved – I have received ALL of Christ. However, the Christian life is the experience of DISCOVERING the Jesus that God has given me. We do receive ALL of Jesus Christ at salvation, but the Christian life is a matter of our coming into a knowledge of the Jesus who we have received in fullness.

It is very important to understand that in Christ is everything that God has to give because if we grasp this Truth we will not be out looking for what we need elsewhere – in other people or in other sources. God knows that in the Christian church today there are folks everywhere offering people, “add-ons,” to Christ – i.e., “something that you REALLY NEED to be a Christian.” No. You do not need anything except HIM – because HE IS THE LIFE.

Now, we can see just how COMPLETE we are in Christ – we can see that we have freely received all things in Jesus Christ – by turning to I Corinthians 1:30. This is another passage that is so easy to read right over without catching the immensity and important of it. But it tells us WHO Christ is – IN US; what He is to us. It says, “But of God you are IN Christ Jesus”

– there it is again, “Christ in us; us in Christ” -- “But of God you are IN Christ Jesus, who of God is MADE UNTO US (to be) wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” The point is, God has not given us THINGS, “in addition,” to Christ. No. Rather, God gives us CHRIST – IN whom are all things.

We could state this Truth about any aspect of the Christian experience. For example, when I was growing up, I was taught that, “eternal life,” was a THING. I didn’t even know what that meant. But I sort of thought that, “eternal life,” was a THING – maybe a legal classification, or perhaps a, “bucket,” of something that God handed me that saved me. And so I thought that, “eternal life,” was a THING. But eternal life is NOT a thing. Eternal life is a PERSON. Jesus Christ said, “I AM the Resurrection and THE LIFE.” He said, “I AM the Way, and the Truth, and THE LIFE.” Indeed, you and I are alive eternally – in other words, SAVED – for one reason: We are joined to the Person who is LIFE – we are joined to Life Himself.

We are joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him – and thus, if I am joined to the Person who said, “I AM the Life” – I am alive. I am alive with HIS LIFE – and the fact that I am joined to the Lord is the

ONLY reason I am alive. Consequently, Jesus Christ has not merely given me life. No. Rather, HE IS MY LIFE. (Col. 3:4)

This same principle is being stated here in I Corinthians 1:30. For example, take this matter of RIGHTEOUSNESS. I was always taught that God gives me a righteousness; or makes me righteous – because I put my faith in Christ. And we do have our doctrine of, “justification by faith.” It is a good doctrine; it is a fundamental Christian doctrine. It states that if I put my faith in Jesus Christ that God will impute to Jesus my sin, and will impute to me the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That is a great LEGAL explanation of how God declares the sinner to be righteous because of faith in Jesus Christ. But we must take this a step further as shown in this passage, I Corinthians 1:30. This passage does NOT say that God merely give us a righteousness of our own; nor gives us a LEGAL classification of righteousness. No. Paul says that Jesus Christ in us IS our righteousness.

This means that God does more than legally IMPUTE to me the righteousness of Jesus Christ. No. That is included. But what God does is IMPART to me the Person of Christ Himself. This means that Jesus Christ IS my righteousness.

If you think about this it is an incredible thing: Jesus Christ Himself is my righteousness – as He dwells in me – and nothing can subtract from Him. And if Jesus is my righteousness – then because His righteousness is NOT based on me; is NOT based on my works; is not based on anything about me – then HE is the only righteousness that I have and the only righteousness that I need. Nothing can change this because the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is finished – He is the Alpha and the Omega.

And so when we read I Corinthians 1:30 we are not reading about THINGS that God gives us. Rather, they are descriptions of WHO Christ is IN US. Do you want wisdom? Then grow to know Jesus. Do you want righteousness? Then put your faith in Christ -- because HE IS your righteousness. Do you want to be sanctified? Well, sanctification is Christ manifested in and through the believer. And redemption? That covers all.

Thus, Jesus Christ really IS the Alpha and the Omega. He is that to US – He is our ALL. That is why our faith needs to be in HIM, rather than in ourselves. That is why we are to rest IN HIM.

Jesus said, “I AM the Vine and you are the branches. Abide in Me.” What does it

mean for a branch to abide in a vine?" A branch draws from the vine everything it needs to live. Jesus took pains in that passage from John 15, about the Vine and the branches, to say, "Without Me you can do nothing. The only way in which you can bear fruit is if you abide in Me." How many understand that there can be nothing unless we abide in Christ because it is only by abiding in Christ that He is our LIFE – this is about the impact of HIS LIFE – this is about His LIFE flowing through the branches unto the bearing of fruit. Christian FRUIT is NOT, "me developing myself." Neither is Christian fruit the result of me taking classes or programs to figure out how to develop in myself better character. Rather, Christian fruit is a matter of me LOSING MY LIFE into the hands of Jesus Christ, so that, over the course of time, Jesus Christ, who IS my life, can bear His fruit and manifest Himself through me.

Along this same line of Jesus Christ being ALL in the believer – and of God having given us everything He has to give in His Son – we find in Col. 2:3 that Paul states, "In whom (Christ) are hid ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." In whom? In Christ. In CHRIST – the Person of Jesus Christ – are hidden ALL of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Paul does not say that SOME of the

treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ, and that you need to go someplace else to get more of it. No. ALL is in Christ. So what this is saying to us is that if you want to discover the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, you must discover Christ. You must come into the knowledge of Jesus Christ in an INWARD way. For if all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ, then it is ONLY as Christ Himself is unfolded that these will come into our experience. Again – all true discernment in the Christian life is a by-product of knowing Jesus Christ.

Another passage to which I alluded to earlier was Col. 2:9-10. Paul writes there, “In Christ dwells all the fullness of DEITY bodily.” The English word, “Godhead,” in the KJV is not the proper translation. The Greek word means, “Deity.” So it reads, “In Christ dwells all the fullness of Deity bodily” – so everything that there is of God is in Christ – and that is why verse 10 says that if Christ is in you, “You are complete IN HIM.”

Here’s an illustration – it is a bit mechanical – but picture Jesus as a package. And in the package named Jesus is everything that there could possibly be of God. But then that is the Christ to whom we are joined in spirit.

And the Christian life is a matter of discovering Him; of growing in the grace and knowledge of Him.

Also in Colossians 3:4, Paul writes, “Christ, who is our life.” Think about that for a moment: “Christ, who is our life.” There is nothing outside of LIFE. Nothing, that is, but DEATH. Thus, if Christ is our life, then Christ is our ALL. And we grow into Him as we go on as Christian people.

An Inward Realization of Christ

Christianity is, “Christ in us.” And up to this point we have discussed many of the Truths associated with the reality of being joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. But none of these things would be of any practical value if all we did were to write them down on a piece of paper and experience nothing more. But the truth is, God wants to bring us into an experiential knowledge of His Son. Experiencing Christ obviously doesn’t happen in five minutes – it happens over the course of a lifetime of a believer if they go on with Christ.

Paul continually exhorted believers to experience Jesus Christ – to come to know Him in an inward way through by experiencing Him. Paul constantly dealt

with those who wanted to turn Christianity into a belief system – into a system of laws, rules, and religion. The Galatian church was one such group of people who were guilty of this error. Paul's epistle to the Galatians is an epistle written to a church that was trying to live the Christian life under the law. In that epistle, we find Paul's answer to such error – and it strikes at the heart and core of our subject today of, "Christ in us." "Christ in us" – the Living Christ who is in us -- is, after all, the answer to a false Christianity comprised of laws, rules, and religiosity.

The Galatians were trying to maintain their own righteousness before God through their own works. This is something that I think we can all relate to. If you are a human being, and you become a Christian, you will be guilty of this at one point or another – it is just the way the old nature continues to function. We must get set free from it. The Galatians had turned this matter of righteousness through works into a science. They were trying to maintain their righteousness before the Lord through all kinds of law keeping. But take note that people like the Galatians, who are, "under the law," are not out there SINNING – as far as what they are doing in an outward way. No. In fact, if there is one thing that is true about people that are walking in legalism, it is that they "obey

God.” The primary problem, however, is not what they are doing or not doing. The problem is that their faith is in their works; their faith is in themselves – rather than in One who is, “other than themselves,” Jesus Christ.

I used to walk in this error when I was younger. My goodness – I crossed every “T” and dotted every “I” with regards to law. But if you had told me that I was trying to keep myself right with God, I would have protested, “NO. I am NOT. I have faith in Christ.” This is deception. And this is what the Galatians were doing. They thought that they were, “obeying God.” And yet behind it all, their faith was NOT in Christ. Believers who desire to walk with God are going to obey God and do good works. But if, all the while I am doing my good works, my faith is not in Christ, I am in unbelief. I am deceived. I am actually sinning.

Do we understand that this kind of supposed, “obedience” could be a product, not of faith, but of unbelief? It is entirely possible to try to obey God, not because my faith is in Christ, but because it is NOT – I am, “obeying,” because my faith is in myself -- I am trying to keep myself righteous through my supposed obedience. This is the very deception that

most Christian people are under who have not seen the Truth of grace.

The Galatian church was under this deception. In fact, Paul said, "You are under ANOTHER GOSPEL. You are under, "another gospel" – this is NOT the Truth." He said, "You need to be delivered from this; you need to see the Truth of Christ." All through this epistle of Galatians this is his exhortation to them.

In Galatians 4:19, we find Paul's heart cry for the Galatian church in answer to all of this, "works mentality." In fact, it is the answer to ALL deception, ALL spiritual poverty, ALL error. Paul says, "My little children, over whom I travail in birth again, until CHRIST BE FORMED IN YOU." This is Paul's answer – it is his solution to not only legalism, but to all that might corrupt our spiritual lives.

What does Paul mean by the phrase, "Christ be formed in you?" Well, he is not talking about receiving Christ for salvation – the Galatian church was comprised of people already saved. Paul affirms that in the epistle. No. Paul is talking about something that is AFTER salvation, indeed, only possible if Christ is ALREADY in you. The word, "formed," is translated from a Greek word that means, "to inwardly realize and express." So when

Paul says "I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," he is saying, "I am in travail as a woman about to give birth until you come into an INWARD REALIZATION and knowing of Jesus Christ."

So again, we see that the core of Christianity is, "Christ in you," but that God's purpose once we are joined to the Lord in spirit is to bring us into an inward realization and knowing of Jesus Christ.

That God's people might come into an inward realization of Christ is actually the travail of God Himself – here expressed through Paul. God inspired these words. He inspired Paul to write, "I travail...." So we can be sure it is the travail of God Himself for His people. The question is therefore, "Is this OUR travail?"

I did a study one time through the New Testament and gathered up all the passages wherein Paul gets adamant about certain things – Gal. 4:19 being one of those places. He was inspired to write phrases such as, "I travail...I long for this....I long for that" -- sometimes he mentions that he is in tears over a matter. But despite the fact that Paul was human and certainly not perfect, God did inspire Paul to express the importance of these Truths in these ways. Paul said, "I

travail....” So again – is this MY travail – that believers come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ? Of course, if it is NOT, then I can turn to God and ask Him to make it so.

And so, “My little children, over whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you – until you come into an inward realization of this Christ whom you have received, and who is your life, and in whom God has freely given you all things.”

The Work of the Cross

There is a way in which God brings us into an inward realization of His Son. There is a way in which God brings His people to where they can manifest Christ. It is not by taking classes. It is not by going to a theological seminary and get a degree. You can study until you are blue in the face and may still never know Jesus. Neither does God merely, “act upon us,” by His Spirit, or just, “do things to us,” by His Spirit. None of that can bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, nor make it possible for us to manifest Him.

Turn to II Corinthians 4:7. Paul writes, “But we have this Treasure – Jesus Christ – in an EARTHEN vessel....” How many see that once again Paul is speaking about, “Christ in us?” We also see once

again the separation in each believer of soul – the earthy nature – from the spirit, which carries the heavenly nature in Christ: There is the Treasure. And there is the earthen vessel. The Treasure is not the earthen vessel and the earthen vessel is not the Treasure. In other words, “Christ IN US,” really does speak of the joining in spirit of TWO persons – the believer and Christ. The believer actually receives – from the outside of them into them from the outside – the Person of Jesus Christ through the means of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus Christ remains distinct from us even while He is in us – despite the fact that we are joined to Him in spirit. Christ and the individual maintain identity.

Once we realize that we are actually JOINED to the Lord in spirit – the Person of Jesus Christ actually dwells in us – and that He maintains His identity even though we are joined to Him in spirit – then we will also see that ALL that is of value that comes to us comes solely from HIM. Jesus did not come to dwell in us as an adjunct power to bring out our supposed greatness. He did not come to ignite some supposed latent potential that we already possessed. No. Jesus Christ is our life – and within HIS LIFE is all – Jesus Christ brings everything to those who have, in themselves, nothing.

Paul states this exact Truth. He say, "We have this Treasure in an earthen vessel" – but here is the effect: "That the excellency of the power may be OF GOD and not of US." The power is the Christ who dwells in us – through the means of the Holy Spirit – the power is not of the soul or of anything that is earthly. The power is not OF US. There should be no SOUL POWER governing the life of the church or of the individual. Paul says in I Corinthians 1, "Christ, the power of God. He repeats that here: "The power of God is out from the Treasure. It is not out from US."

After Paul speaks of the Treasure in earthen vessels, he goes on in verses 8 and 9 to speak of his many trials – with which all of us can identify. There are tremendous trials that Christians can be in – health, finances, relationships, etc. Some of these trials can be our fault; others are not our fault. But the point is, are we turning them to God? So all of these things are possible in the life of the believer. False teachings abound today that demand that Christians ought to never suffer; that a Christian, if they, "REALLY have faith," ought to never be sick. These teachings are baloney. Read the Bible. Right here it is: We are troubled on every side." It sounds like Paul considers trials

in the life of a believer to be, “business as usual.”

Paul is going to tell us how God uses trials and suffering in the life of the believer. He says in verse 9, “We are persecuted, but not forsaken. We are cast down, but not destroyed.” Now, here is the effect – IF – and it is a big IF – IF we are turning to God in these matters. Some won’t turn to God. But if we are turning to God in these matters, then what Paul writes starting in verse 10 will come to pass for us: “We will always be bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” How many see here, once again, that yes, Christ did die FOR us, but that we must now die in Him – that we must be crucified WITH Him?”

Paul is writing here about the work of the Cross – the work of the PERSONAL CROSS. There is simply no possible way to follow Jesus Christ, or come into God’s purpose, or even to know Christ, unless we are crucified WITH Christ. We become crucified with Christ by picking up our personal cross.

It is a fact that Jesus Christ died FOR us – and that His death was once for all and final for all of us. Picking up our personal cross does nothing to add to the finished work of Jesus Christ. But the personal

cross does bring us into an experiential fellowship with Christ in His death – our personal cross works out in our experience what Christ has finished. It is through this work of the cross that we, “bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” And if that is happening, then the power that is of that body – which is the earthly nature – will be broken.

But there is more. We read that Paul does say in II Corinthians 4, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” -- but then He gives us the result of our bearing in our earthly nature this death: “So that the LIFE also of the Lord Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” The work of our personal cross is upon the nature that Jesus bore on His Cross – our earthly nature; our body of sin. But it is as this old life and nature is crucified with Christ that we will experience a greater release in us of the resurrection life of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself stated in Matthew 16: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever would seek to save his life will lose it. And whosoever would lose his life for My sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:24-25) Jesus is saying that if we relinquish to Him our life – deny or relinquish to Him our self-ownership under the work of the

personal cross – that a death will take place. But it will be the death of that very natural self-life that we relinquish. This equals being crucified WITH Christ, because on the Cross Jesus not only bore our sin, but He bore our self. The result will be that we will experience a greater freedom from that old nature. But we will also, “find Jesus as our life.” This is, of course, a progressive matter – for we will never be able to exhaust the Person of Jesus.

Paul concludes this passage by stating, “For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”

So here we see the essential to coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ: We must lose our life into His hands by picking up the personal cross that God brings. If we go back to the illustration of the separation of soul from spirit – using the picture of a CIRCLE -- this may become more clear. Our union with Christ is INSIDE of that circle. All that is OUTSIDE of that circle remain natural and earthly. The work of the personal cross is to bring freedom through death to that which is OUTSIDE of our spiritual union with Christ – death to what is earthly and natural – so that this can no longer govern

us. But as this happens, we will be set free from that earthly and natural that is under the cross, and we will experience a greater release of the life of Jesus Christ.

The reason that this will result in a greater inward realization of Jesus Christ is that, “the light is in the life.” John states in his gospel, regarding Jesus, “In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.” If I pick up my personal cross and my life is crucified WITH Christ, then His life will find a greater release. And if His life finds a greater release than carried in it will be a greater realization of, and knowledge of, Him. Jesus Christ is a Person – and if I have relinquish my life to Him, and found Him as my life, carried with this is going to be a greater realization of that Person.

The most common term used in the NT for a Christian is the term, “saint.” The word, “saint,” come from the Greek word that means, “holy” – a saint is a, “holy one.” But we need to realize what this means. To be, “holy,” means to belong to God, rather than to myself. Thus, the very term that God inspired to refer to those in Christ means that we must lose our lives to Christ so that He might be our life.

Just as there is no salvation unless a person first comes to the Cross, so it is a fact that there is no way to walk with

Jesus Christ and come into His fullness unless we pick up the personal cross that God brings. Jesus said so. He said, "IF anyone would come after Me...." We MUST lose ourselves and all that we are into the hands of Jesus Christ -- if we want to find HIM as our life. How do we LOSE our lives in the way Jesus stated? There is a place we can begin. We can ask God, "to do whatever it takes," to bring us into the fullness of His Son. We may have no clue as to what it WILL take. But God will answer that prayer. And then, when God does begin to do whatever it takes, we will need to pick up that cross and continue to give ourselves to Him through faith and obedience.

Losing Our Lives

Many believers have difficulty understanding what it really means, "to lose your life," as Jesus said we must do. Often we think of THINGS we must lose. Indeed, many believers grow fearful at the thought of giving themselves wholly to Jesus Christ. Surely, we imagine, losing ourselves to Jesus is going to result in disaster and suffering.

Jesus Christ is not asking us to lose THINGS. He is asking us to lose OURSELVES. THINGS may or may not be involved as tools. But in the end, Jesus

wants us to relinquish our self-ownership. If He has that, then He has US.

In addition, Jesus did not simply command us to LOSE our lives. He also promised that if we did LOSE our lives – and ONLY if we would lose them – that we would find our life. And since Jesus Christ is THE life – the only life of a Christian – then we can be sure that He was saying that if we LOSE ourselves to Him that we would find Him AS our life – and discover all that is IN HIM.

Paul the apostle, in Philippians 3, shared how he lost himself to Jesus Christ. The tone of his story is set in verse 3. He says, “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” To have, “no confidence in the flesh,” means that we realize that there is NOTHING about ourselves that we can use to stand before Christ, or use to walk with God. How many see that the issue here is not merely THINGS? Rather, the issue is US – it is faith.

Paul then lists all of his religious assets in verses 4 through 6. These were the religious assets that belonged to his life before his conversion. Central to all of these is that Paul was, “touching the righteousness which is in the law,

blameless.” Paul was absolutely convinced that because of his law-keeping that he was right with God. Thus, SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS was central to all that Paul was before he encountered Jesus Christ.

If you read down the list of Paul’s assets, you will not find one material THING. Neither will you find one SIN – in the normal sense of the word. No. Everything on that list is religious in nature, or was the result of Paul’s zeal for his religion. And yet Paul states, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” In short, what Paul is telling us is that what he had to lose for Christ was his OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Self-righteousness is often misunderstood. It is manifested by doing works to keep ourselves right with God – but at the core it is UNBELIEF. It is unbelief because it is faith in myself – instead of in Jesus Christ. That means that self-righteousness is actually great SIN. Indeed, self-righteousness is self-deception – because none of us ever had a shred of righteousness in ourselves. There is only ONE righteousness – it is the Person of Jesus Christ.

Self-righteousness is nothing more than an expression of self-ownership. It is

fundamental to the corrupt nature of the Adam race. It is the result of a human being thinking they have found something in themselves that is of value. Thus, RELIGIOUS self-righteousness is the same – it is a RELIGIOUS expression of self-ownership. It is a religious means – indeed, a “Christianized,” means of trying to save my life for my self – legitimizing this through works. This is why it is contrary to the Cross – this is why it is, “another gospel.”

Most of us, even after we come to Christ, continue to be self-righteous. But there is no possible way – if we come into a realization of Jesus Christ – that this will continue. Self-righteous, and religious self-ownership, are NOT the Truth. Jesus Christ is the Truth. And the more we come into an inward knowledge of Him, the more we are going to see the sin and unbelief behind our self-righteousness.

As noted earlier, Paul’s answer to the Galatian sin of self-righteousness was, “that Christ be formed in them.” (Gal. 4:19) He travailed that they might come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ – because he knew that if that would happen, all of their self-righteousness would be exposed for the sin and lie that it is. They would be set free because they saw Jesus.

Paul knew what he was talking about because this was exactly what happened to him personally, as he shared in Philippians 3. He says, "I count all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Can we possibly catch the magnitude of what Paul is saying – it applies to ALL of us. He is saying that it is by losing – not material things – but it is by losing our self-righteousness that we come to know Jesus. It is by losing everything about ourselves that we might use as the basis of our faith that we "win Christ and are found in Him." It is by losing our self-righteousness, which is based in self-ownership, that we come into a true realization of Jesus Christ as our righteousness, indeed, as our LIFE.

So rather than focus on THINGS that we might have to lose in order to find life in Christ, we need to understand that this is not about losing THINGS. It is about losing ourselves – it is about losing

everything about ourselves that we might have presented to God. That will cut to the heart and core of what makes us tick – it will crucify the religiosity out of us. But it will bring us to the place where we will truly realize Jesus Christ, and realize what it means to know Him as our only life, and our only righteousness.

Paul the apostle, by his own admission, was the greatest sinner who ever lived – because he was the most self-righteous person who ever lived. But when he lost himself to Jesus Christ, all of his self-righteousness came under the Cross. And then he found Christ. God wants to do for us what he did for Paul – and so we can ask God, “to do whatever it takes,” to bring us into the fullness of Jesus Christ, as he did Paul.

Yet Not I, But Christ

If we could point to one phrase that ought to express the outcome of not only, “Christ in us,” but of a believer coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, Galatians 2:20 contains that phrase. Paul proclaims there, “Yet not I, but Christ!” This ought to be the witness of each believer – we are, after all, HIS witnesses. Our life should never proclaim, “Yet not Christ, but I!” If I am walking with Jesus Christ and under the ongoing work of the

cross, then this phrase from Galatians 2:20 will be my joyful proclamation. I will say, with John the Baptist, "I must decrease that He might increase."

The number one purpose of the Spirit of God is to reveal Jesus Christ TO us, IN us, and then THROUGH us. The end result will be a life that proclaims – not just to others – but to ourselves, "Yet not I, but Christ." This is the life that will emerge from the reality of being joined to the Lord in spirit – it will be the life that is the outcome of, "Christ in us" -- if we go on with God in the Truth.

The Hope of Glory

The meaning of Christianity is not restricted to this age. We see this in our verse from Col. 1:27: "Christ in us, the hope of glory." In this age, "Christ in us," is indeed our, "HOPE of glory" – our HOPE of experiencing HIS glory. But when Christ returns, that hope will be transformed into a full realization.

The purpose of God for the saints can only be fully realized in the eternal ages. Salvation is the beginning. Jesus has redeemed people for a REASON and a PURPOSE – only fully realized in the eternal ages – that we might fully experience God through Jesus Christ –

and be used by Him for His eternal purposes.

May God finish what He has begun. Jesus Christ has joined believers to Himself. That is salvation. The Christian life, through the work of the Cross and release of life in us, is the experience of being brought into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. But the full fruitage of this great miracle is yet to be seen. It will take place when Jesus Christ returns and the saints rise to meet Him.