

CHRIST

The Sum of All Spiritual Things

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Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version of the Bible (1901), unless otherwise indicated.

1

Christ Is the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14.6)

“I am the way and the truth and the life,” says the Lord Jesus. This clearly informs us that the way which God gives is Christ, the truth which God gives is also Christ, and the life which God gives is likewise Christ. Christ is our way, Christ is our truth, Christ is our life. It is through Christ that we come to the Father. In God’s heart, that which is related to Him is Christ, who is also His Son. What He gives to us is Christ himself; He has not given us many things outside of Christ.

Oftentimes in spiritual matters, we see and we touch a thing which is merely a term or a letter, void of any spiritual usefulness to us. How we need to ask God to open our eyes that we may know His Son. The characteristic of Christianity lies in the fact that its source, depth, and riches are involved with the knowledge of God’s Son. It matters not how much we know of methods or doctrines or power. What really matters is the knowledge of the Son of God. Knowing God’s Son is the way, knowing God’s Son is the truth, and knowing God’s Son is the life. Our power comes from knowing His Son. All that God gives to us is His Son, not a lot of things. Hence the whole question lies in knowing God’s Son.

Christ Is the Way

The word of Jesus is, “I am the way.” This way may also mean the method. What He here tries to convey to us is that He is the way by which we come to God as well as the method by which to reach God. Having Him, we have the way; and possessing Him, we possess

the method. Every true believer must learn this lesson at least once—that is, that the Lord Jesus is the way, the Lord Jesus is the method. If you have been saved, you have at least this experience of trusting the Lord Jesus as your way to God. For He is the way, without whom no one can come to God. All truly saved Christians know how to walk in this way. Thank God, countless real believers have learned at least this lesson, which is, a coming to God by Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. We have traveled in this way at least once. This way is none other than Christ himself. It is not any method outside of Him. We need to see that the Lord Jesus, and not any other method, is the only way by which we come to God initially at the time of salvation and at any subsequent time.

Some Christians are seeking for some spiritual methods. Once after a message was given concerning victory through Christ and not through self, one brother took the hand of the brother who spoke and said, “For many years I have been consistently defeated, but today everything is well.” Whereupon the preaching brother asked, “How is this so?” To which he answered, “Because I think I have now got a way to victory. Thank the Lord I have found a method today! Victory is through the Lord, not by myself.” But the preaching brother frankly told him in reply that “if all you find is a way of victory, then you will be defeated again.” Why did he say this? Because the Lord Jesus tells us, “I am the way.” In other words, He alone is the way, the method. The way is not outside of Him, for He himself is the way. If all we get is merely a method, we will soon discover its ineffectiveness. God has not given us a method; He gives His own Son to us.

Frequently we listen to the experience of others and feel its preciousness, but we see only a method instead of seeing the Lord whom the other person has touched. As a result, we suffer defeat after defeat. The prime reason is that we have not learned the Lord as the way.

Let us understand that to believe in the Lord himself, and to believe a formula, are actually two different motions. By the grace of God, one Christian has his eyes opened to see what kind of person he is; he therefore lays himself down and believes in the Lord, trusting the latter to do within him what he himself cannot do. As its consequence, he obtains release and is fully satisfied before God. Later on, though, another believer comes along. Upon hearing the testimony of the first person, he too asks God to enlighten him that he may know how useless a man he is. He too learns to believe in God and to humbly abandon himself. Yet it strangely turns out that he does not receive the deliverance which the first one experiences. What is the explanation for this? It is because the first brother has living faith which enables him to touch the Lord as well as believe in God, while the second brother has not faith at all but only a “copied faith formula”; and thus he does not reach God. Briefly stated, what this second brother gets is a method, not the Lord. A method has no power nor effectiveness; for not being Christ, it is simply a dead thing.

Every spiritual thing outside of Christ is dead. Let us underscore this well. Some brothers and sisters are inwardly wondering: “How strange that an other person believes God and his prayer is answered, while I too believe and yet am not heard. Why is God gracious to him and not to me?” They seem to charge God with partiality, not realizing that what they believe is but a thing, and therefore dead. Neither formula nor method works; only Christ is living. Even if one has learned a whole set of methods, he is not therefore educated to be a Christian, because God’s children must be born, not taught.

“I am the way,” asserts the Lord Jesus. Christ is the way, Christ is the method. Dear friends, is Christ your way and is Christ your method? Or is it only a way and a method? Thank God, if *Christ* is our method, everything will be successful. But if ours is just a method—and however good, accurate and incomparable it may be—it still is dead and has no spiritual value. The reason for many

unanswered prayers and ineffective testimonies is found in our not touching the Lord. We have merely copied the method of others; we have not touched the Lord himself.

Once a servant of the Lord gave a message on Romans 6-8 in a certain place. One brother, after hearing the message, said: "Today I understand the way of victory. I now am clear. I believe hereafter I will never be defeated as I was before." Another brother came to the preacher and nodded his head a little. When he was asked how he felt, he replied, "I do not know how to describe it. But the Lord has opened my eyes. Though I cannot say I have seen Him, I dare not say I have not seen Him either." What this second brother obtained was not a method but the Lord himself. Consequently, he firmly maintained the ground, while the first one failed again; for the first brother had only received a method and not the Lord himself; and therefore it had no value.

Many times even the motive behind our hearing a message is erroneous. Instead of asking the Lord for revelation that we may see Him, we try with our brain to memorize a method to take back with us. And even if we follow that method, we will get nowhere. Sometimes, though, we seem to catch a glimpse, perhaps without having any great assurance to dare to say that we have seen the Lord. Nevertheless, we do see Him and such insight brings in real change. Thank the Lord, this is the way. Not that we have learned a method, but we have come to know the Lord. It is clearly shown to us that the Lord himself is the method.

For this reason, then, we should, upon hearing a message or a testimony, examine ourselves as to whether we have encountered the Lord or merely understood a method. There is no deliverance in knowing a method as there is in knowing the Lord. Listening to how He helps others will not save us, our trusting in the Lord alone is effectual. Their words may sound about the same, yet their actualities

are worlds apart. The Lord is the Lord of life. Whoever touches Him touches life. Touching the Lord alone gives life.

Christ Is the Truth

The Lord not only introduces himself as the way, He also speaks of himself as the truth. The truth does not refer to the words spoken about Christ; it is Christ himself who is the truth. How often Christians take the teaching and the interpretations of Christ as truths, though in actuality truth is not the relating of a thing but is the person of Christ. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," says the Lord (John 8.32). Brothers and sisters, just consider how many truths have actually made us free? The word of God states that the truth shall make us free, but how many times truth is merely a doctrine to us. Our eyes have not been opened to see Christ. We may have talked about many doctrines for some ten years, still we have not seen. We may have listened to them for an equal length of time, and yet again we have not seen. People may be able to speak on the doctrine of co-death without knowing the power of this death. Or to converse on resurrection life without experiencing its power. If all we talk about is doctrine, we are handling something dead.

Once a person wrote to a brother. as follows: "A brother has sinned against me, and I am not clear whether I should forgive him. I therefore ask you to instruct me. My heart is quite composed before God. If you say I should forgive, I will forgive him. If you think I should not, then I will not forgive him." Brethren, what is your opinion about such a Christian? Suppose the one dearest to me is dead and so I write a letter to another person inquiring thus: "He who is dearest to me is dead; should I therefore mourn? If you say I should cry, I will cry; but if you say no, then I will not cry." Most certainly you will laugh at such an inquiry, for it is absurd. If a person cries or does not cry according as he is told, neither his

mourning nor his lack of mourning is real. Both are false, and are therefore dead works and not life. With your brother, you either forgive or you do not forgive. Whenever you act on dead doctrine it is pretension.

Friends, whatever is not Christ living in us or is not Christ as our truth—that is, whatever is done on the basis of a doctrine—is dead work. It has no life, it is not living. Do you see the difference here? It is a difference too vast to go unnoticed. Work requires our memory, but life acts spontaneously. A word spoken out of life is not propelled by our memory, rather is it motivated by a power within us. The Lord, not doctrine nor teaching, is in control over us. There must be a day when God opens our eyes to perceive that spiritual reality is in Christ. We do not try to remember certain doctrines and act accordingly; it is Christ who lives in us. He is our truth, therefore it is living.

There was once a brother who was offended by another brother. He could not abide the offence, and so he heatedly scolded the offending brother. Afterwards, his conscience was ill at ease. He felt he should go to the offending brother and apologize. But as he recalled how that brother had offended him, his anger was again stirred. Meanwhile, he still felt he owed the other brother an apology. So he decided to write a letter to him. He took up his pen and began to write: “I feel it is wrong for me to have scolded you.” But as he was reminded of how wrong that brother was who had so offended him, his anger once more returned. After waiting awhile, he took up his pen and continued to write. During the entire time of writing he felt anger in his heart. Even when he posted the letter, he still was annoyed. By all appearances, this letter looked like one written by a Christian, though we know it was the result of doctrine and not of life. Although he wrote a letter of apology, his heart remained filled with wrath. Should he meet that brother, he might greet him and shake hands, yet inwardly the controversy had not passed away, and so his words could not possibly be natural. Beloved, do we now see

the difference? The Lord is the truth. If ever it be doctrine and not the Lord it is dead. May we realize that in all spiritual matters, *with* the Lord it is life, but *without* the Lord it is death. If a thing is done as a result of His shining and working in us, then this thing is living.

Christ Is the Life

Following the words “I am the way and the truth”, the Lord continues with “and the life.” We are mindful of the fact that life issues forth spontaneously in work, but work cannot be a substitute for life. We ought to be crystal clear here that work is not life—for life is effortless, life is Christ himself. How people toil to be Christians! How we are wearied through daily exertion. Most severe are these doctrines, for they demand of us to be humble, gentle, forgiving, and long-suffering. They literally wear us out. Many concede that to be a Christian is a difficult task. This is especially true with young believers. The more they try, the more difficult it becomes. Upon having tried for a length of time, they still bear no resemblance to a Christian. Brothers and sisters, if Christ is not life, *we* have to do the work; but if *He* is life, then we do not need to struggle. Repeatedly we say that life is Christ himself, and work can never substitute life.

There is a grave mistake pervasive among God’s children. Many regard life as something which they must do in their own strength, or else there is no life. What all of us should realize is, that if there is life there will not be the slightest need for our own doing, but that life will naturally flow. Consider for a moment how our eyes see and our ears hear. Our eyes see most naturally and our ears hear spontaneously because there is life in them. We must be clear on this point: life flows naturally into work, but work is never a substitute for life. Sometimes work proves instead the absence of life or the weakness of life. Life will issue in good morals, but good morals are no stand-in for life. For example, a brother may be very gentle,

moderate and reserved. Someone will praise him, saying, "This brother's life is not bad." No, he has used the wrong terminology. For the Lord says, "I am the life." However gentle, moderate and reserved this brother may be, if these do not come from Christ they are not reckoned as life. It is perfectly true to say this man has a good temper or he rarely causes any trouble or he always treats people kindly and never quarrels; but it cannot be said of him that he has a rich spiritual life. If these things are natural to him they are not life, for they do not come from Christ.

Other people cherish another thought. They conclude that life is power. To have the Lord as our life means to be given power by Him to do good. Nevertheless, God shows us that our power is not a thing; it is simply Christ. Our power is not the strength to do things; rather, it is a Person. Life to us is not only power but also a Person. It is Christ who manifests himself in us, instead of our using Christ to display our good works.

Once a brother attended a meeting at a certain place. He was asked by an elderly Christian, "Why do you go there to meet?" "Because there is life," he answered. The elderly man said, "True, as regards enthusiasm, our meetings are not comparable to that place." "You do not understand," replied this brother. "That place does not have a frenzied atmosphere at all." "What do you mean?" asked the elderly brother. "How can there be life if it is not fervid?" Answered the younger brother, "There is nothing at all noisy about it, and yet there is life. For life does not necessarily have to be emotionally exciting or enthusiastic or fervid or loud." Then the elderly man philosophized, "Perhaps young people like fervor, but I prefer thoughtful words. When I hear profound words, I meet life. I think this indeed is life." But the young brother said in return, "I have many times heard the deep words which you refer to, but I have not met any life." Dear people, from the conversation of these two men, we may see that life is neither emotional excitement nor thoughtful

words. Words of wisdom, clever sayings, logical arguments and thoughtful dissertations are not necessarily life.

Not surprisingly, some will inquire, “How strange that life is neither fervor nor elevating thought. Where, then, can we find life? What is life after all?” We confess we do not have a better way to express this matter of holding forth life. All we can say is that it is something deeper than emotion and more profound than thought. And once one meets it, he will instantly be quickened within. This something is called life.

What is life? Life is more profound than thought; thought never surpasses life. It also is deeper than emotion; emotion is superficial in comparison with life. Whether thought or emotion, it is relatively external. What, then, is life? The Lord Jesus declared: “I am the life.” We should not hastily conclude that we have met life when all we meet is a kind of hot atmosphere, such as a so-called spiritually hot atmosphere. We should ask instead, whence does such atmosphere arise? Plenty of experiences confirm to us that many who are skillful in creating hot atmosphere know very little of the Lord, many excitable persons are quite lacking in the knowledge of the Lord. Only Christ is life, the rest is not.

We need to learn the lesson of knowing life. For life depends not on how enthusiastic is our emotion or on how manifold is our thought; it rests exclusively on whether the Lord has manifested His own self. There is therefore nothing more important than to know the Lord. As we are knowing Him, we are touching life. We ought to see before God the meaning of Christ our life. Those who are easily excitable or especially clever are not necessarily people who know the Lord. Knowing Him requires a spiritual seeing. Such seeing is life and it transforms us. If we know the Lord as our life, we realize the utter futility of all natural efforts in spiritual matters. Hence we look to Him alone.

When we first believed in the Lord, we did not realize what looking to Him truly meant. But gradually we learn increasingly to look to Him, having recognized that everything depends upon Christ, and not upon us. In the beginning of our Christian walk we desired to possess one thing after another; we could not trust Him for everything. After we learned a bit more, however, we received some understanding as to the necessity of trusting Him: not in the sense of believing Him to grant us item after item, but in the sense of trusting Him to do what we are unable to do by ourselves. When we first became a Christian, we were inclined to do everything ourselves, fearing lest nothing would ever be done or matters would fall to pieces if we did not do them. Hence we were working all the time. Later, in having seen the Lord to be our life, we know that all is of Christ and not of us. Consequently, we learn to rest and to look to Him.

Let us keep in mind that instead of giving us one object after another, God gives His Son to us. Because of this, we can always lift up our hearts and look to the Lord, saying, "Lord, you are my way; Lord, you are my truth; Lord, you are my life. It is you, Lord, who is related to me, not your things." May we ask God to give us grace that we may see Christ in all spiritual things. Day by day we are convinced that aside from Christ there is no way, nor truth, nor life. How easily we make *things* as way, truth, and life. Or, we call hot atmosphere as life, we label clear thought as life. We consider strong emotion or outward conduct as life. In reality, though, these are not life. We ought to realize that only the Lord is life. Christ is our life. And it is the Lord who lives out this life in us. Let us ask Him to deliver us from the many external and fragmentary affairs that we may touch only Him. May we see the Lord in all things—way, truth, and life are all found in knowing Him. May we really meet the Son of God and let Him live in us. Amen.

2

Christ Is the Resurrection and the Life

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life. (John 11.25)

John Chapter 11 reveals how the Lord Jesus gave life to one already dead—in other words, how He raised the dead. He was able to raise the dead and He caused a dead man to be resurrected, but instead of saying “I raise the dead” He said “I am the resurrection.” Shortly after He said this, He did indeed raise the dead. Both Martha and Mary were present on that day. According to their sentiment, it seemed to them far more appropriate for the Lord Jesus to say, “Do not worry about your brother’s death, for I can raise him up.” We like to hear such words. What we admire and anticipate is that God will do more for us. Frequently our prayers and expectations before God are for the promise that the Lord will do thus and so for us. Yet the Lord especially wishes us to see that it is not what He can *do* but what He himself *is*, for His doing is based on His being.

Consider Martha. She believed in the Lord’s power. She said to Him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” So also did Mary believe. But both failed to perceive that the Lord himself is the resurrection and the life. May we notice that all which God can do is included in what He is. People do not receive the power of God because they do not know who He is. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him” (Heb. 11.6).

What the Lord Jesus wishes to tell us here is not that He is able to preserve one’s life but that He himself is life; not that He can raise the dead, but that He himself is resurrection. Let us ask God to open our eyes to see who the Lord is. We must see that, before God, Christ is everything to us. With such understanding we will make real

progress in spiritual matters. It is imperative for us to realize that with God there is no thing but Christ! Our real progress in spiritual matters depends on our grasping this spiritual reality—do we know God himself or know only the things which God has done?

The theme of John Chapter 11 is not on how the Lord Jesus raised up Lazarus but rather on how He himself was resurrection to Lazarus. Do we see the distinction here? The Lord is the resurrection. Because He was resurrection to Lazarus, Lazarus was resurrected. He had not given something called resurrection to Lazarus, He was himself resurrection to Lazarus. In other words, what the Lord did was only the external, but what He was himself was the substance. We do not suggest that the Lord Jesus had not raised up Lazarus; we simply maintain He was resurrection to him, and that therefore Lazarus was raised from the dead.

It is well for us to understand that all God's workings in Christ are embodied in this principle. Because the Lord is that thing in us, therefore we have such thing. First the being, then the having. Many Christians tend to talk about the Giver and His gifts separately. But one day we find out that the Giver is himself His gift. For God does not bring out many and various items to give to us in fragments; what He gives is Christ. It is well if one day our eyes are opened to recognize this—that all things are in Christ.

Here the Lord declares who He is. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." Since He *is* the resurrection, it presents no problem whatever for Lazarus to be raised up. We believe the Lord did raise Lazarus from the dead, but the emphasis was on having the Lord himself. The resurrection of Lazarus is really not a tremendous phenomenon; but knowing the Lord Jesus as resurrection *is* a matter of great significance. Lots of people can believe the Lord Jesus as the life-giver, but to believe Him as life is quite another matter. He not only is the life-giver, He also is life. He is the life He gives as well as the giver of life. He is both the Lord of resurrection and the

resurrection itself. As soon as we touch this, we instantly comprehend that whatever is in Christ is living. What God gives to men is Christ. We hope we may have at least a ray of light flash in upon us, causing us to realize that the Lord is all. “I am the resurrection and the life,” declares our Lord. Resurrection and life include the whole Bible; knowing resurrection and life is therefore a big matter.

Christ Is Life

In the garden of Eden God placed the man He had created. Two possibilities were open to this man: he might have life or he might die. If he ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die; if he ate the fruit of the tree of life, he would have life. The man whom God created was indeed good, but there yet remained a deciding issue—that of life and death. At that time he was capable of thinking and of movement, but he did not have life. We do not mean to say that he was not alive, for judging by man’s natural life he certainly was living. Genesis 2.7 already tells us that “man became a living soul.” Nonetheless, judging by what is represented in the tree of life, he had no life. He possessed the power of thinking and feeling—these constituting the main functions of man’s soul—yet he did not possess the life as symbolized by the tree of life. Here are we instructed that life is deeper than emotion and more profound than thought.

Everything in Christianity has its counterfeit—false repentance, false confession, false conversion, false zeal, false love, counterfeit works of the Holy Spirit, counterfeit gifts of the Holy Spirit, even counterfeit life. How many Christians regard good feeling as life! They esteem hot atmosphere and a loud voice as being full of life. They cannot distinguish between life and feeling, not recognizing that the first is much deeper than the second. Another class of Christians will reckon noble thought, if not strong emotion, as life. If

they find in a message many provocative thoughts, interesting words and commendable arguments, they deem it to be in life. But those who are experienced and who have learned will inform us that life is deeper than feeling or thought. Moreover, life is not action. Not because one is extremely lively, enthusiastic and active can he necessarily be termed to be in life. The person is indeed engaging in action, but this cannot be labeled life. Man in this instance is working instead of living out life.

Now we do not insinuate here that there is no thought, neither feeling nor action, in life; we simply would affirm that life is neither feeling nor thought nor action. You may hear the same good word, yet in one person you sense life while in the other, only thought. You may witness a stirred emotion in one person but meet life in another. Many brethren deem certain sensations in them as life, but those who have learned know better that this is just not so. Many regard certain thoughts within them to be life, but experienced believers will pronounce this as not life at all.

Two brothers may share the same view and give the same interpretation to the same passage of Scripture, yet to experienced Christians these two are different—the one has only thought while the other has life as well as thought. Indeed, it is possible to meet life together with thought—this is frequently true; yet only contacting thought is not contacting life. These are two entirely opposite things. There are so many who think that since they say similar words they are bound to be the same. But this is not true. It is possible for these words to be thought in one person and life in another. “I am the life,” says the Lord. Life is therefore not any matter outside of Christ; it is Christ himself. If it is merely a thing it is dead. The life which many Christians talk about is but the thing they themselves produce.

How we truly need the mercy of the Lord in this respect. We know what thought is, what feeling is, and what activity is; yet we lack a clear appreciation of what life is. May we ask the Lord to

show us what life really is. And one day when we are given such a revelation, we will naturally know what life is, and then we are able to touch the Lord.

Christ Is the Resurrection

Let us turn again to resurrection. That which has encountered death and survives is called resurrection. Whatever outlives death is resurrection. Death came to man after he ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Ever since then, man has been unable to endure death. All who have entered the grave never return. Once gone, they never come back. In the whole universe, among countless numbers of people, there has only been one who has gone into death and come out of it—and this one is our Lord. “I am . . . the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore” (Rev. 1.17,18).

The Lord is the Lord of resurrection. Resurrection speaks of what passes through death but is not held by death. The Bible uses the word “held” to describe the power of death. People enter into death and are not able to come out again because death holds tightly fast all who have entered. But death is not able to hold Christ. Hence this is called life, and it is also called resurrection. Resurrection is the life which was put to death and is alive forevermore. Our Lord Jesus is life because He was dead—having entered into hell, the deepest recess of the earth—yet is alive forevermore. Death has no power to hold Him in its grip. He comes out of death. And such a life as this is called resurrection. Hence a life which bears the marks of death and yet is alive is called resurrection.

Quite a few people are asking why it is recorded in John Chapter 20 that after the Lord Jesus was raised from among the dead He left the imprint of the nails in His hands and that of the spear in His side for Thomas to touch and to probe? We know this is the meaning of resurrection. What the Lord intended to show Thomas was not that

He had been wounded and had died but that He had been wounded and yet He is now alive. He bears in His body the imprint of death; nonetheless He is alive. This is called resurrection.

Such ought to be true in our case. We have in our lives many things which do not carry the imprint of death and therefore they cannot be labeled as resurrection. Only what bears the imprint of death and is alive is called resurrection. Do not imagine that it is well with you if you have eloquence, cleverness and ability. It is quite possible for you to have eloquence, cleverness and ability without the imprint of death. People may judge whether or not there is resurrection by noting if the imprint of death is upon our eloquence, cleverness and ability. A brother may have great talent and may be most capable; he seems to be very much alive. Yet there is no mark of death in his talent because he has such confidence in himself. He trusts that he never does wrong and is sure of success in whatever he undertakes. This person possesses immense self-confidence, self-reliance, -assurance and -strength, but he does not have the mark of death. We do not mean to say a resurrected person does not have power; what we are trying to affirm here is that in the power of a risen one there is the sign of death. He is able to work, but he dare not rely on himself. He can do many deeds yet he has lost that touch of self-assurance, and his own strength has turned into weakness. This we call resurrection.

In his letter to the church at Corinth Paul confesses the following: "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. 2.3). These are words spoken by one who truly knows God. How tragic that there are so many strong and self-confident people among believers. But here is a man who acknowledges himself as being in weakness, in fear, and in trembling. There is the mark of death in his body.

Consequently resurrection and the cross are inseparable. The cross eliminates. Things which issue out of ourselves are unable to rise

again once they have gone through the cross, for they are lost in death. Only what passes through death and survives, what has the sign of death upon it and lives, is resurrection. Resurrection presupposes a passing through death, and passing through death always eliminates something.

Brothers and sisters, if we really know what resurrection is we will know the cross as an eliminating power. When we pass through the cross we will be rid of many things. We will become a totally different person, because many things will have been stripped away from us. What has life about it may alone experience resurrection; without life in it there is no possibility of resurrection. For example, we may cut a block of wood into pieces and bury them in the earth. After many days these will be completely decayed and become wholly useless. But if we cut a branch out of a tree and plant it in the earth we will find it budding after awhile. One will decay while the other will bud. All that is dead will eventually be corrupted; only what is living will be resurrected upon passing through death.

Hence the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is based on His life. Due to a deathless life in Him, He cannot be held by death. With such undying life in Him, He shrugs off death as He is put into it. Let us well recognize that when we pass through the cross experientially we will take many things into death without there being any chance of bringing them out. Only what is of God can be resurrected. In our encounter with the cross we are truly being subtracted. The cross is indeed a huge subtraction; it takes away many things.

Countless brothers and sisters frequently ask this question: How do I know I have died? How can I know that the cross has done its work in me? The answer is a simple one. If the Lord has worked in your life, you will lose many things. If you have remained intact since you were once saved you—being as rich and as full as before—then this plainly indicates that the cross has not worked in you. As the cross operates in life, you will notice what a big subtracting or

cleansing work the Lord has accomplished in you. And as a consequence, what you were able to do before you are now no longer able; what you once were confident of, you presently are not so confident of, and what you originally had great courage in, you lately are hesitant about. Thus are the workings of the Lord proven. In case there is resurrection in your life, then many items must have been left behind in the grave, since things there cannot possibly survive death. Whatever is of Adam cannot live upon its going into death. But the life of the Lord is quite able to pass through death and come out again. This is resurrection.

Sometimes things lost in death are regained in Christ. It is like a branch which, when cut off from a tree, appears dead, but which, when planted in the earth, will once again grow. So by our saying that we have the imprint of death upon us, we do not wish to imply that henceforth we can neither speak nor work; it is only that we will not be so careless and self-reliant in both our speech and action. When a person is touched by God—being dealt with by the cross—he becomes weak and fearful and trembling, with the result that he dare not say “I can” or “I will do”. He will still do his work, yet now with the fear of God in him. He will continue to walk, only now he walks after God, just as Abraham walked step by step after God. In his life today the mark of the cross is plainly noticeable. He has been pierced by God; he is no longer intact; he bears the impress of death. This is called resurrection.

Today God communes with man in the realm of resurrection, and this resurrection includes the cross. Nothing can therefore be related to God without passing through death. All that is of the natural must go to death. God cannot and will not contact or communicate on resurrection ground with anyone who has yet to die and be resurrected. We must die and then be resurrected. The life we receive is resurrection life. Everything we learn which has any relation to God must be raised from the dead.

In spiritual matters, we are faced with one hard problem, which is, that people often serve God with natural things instead of resurrection things. Many have zeal, but few have resurrection zeal—a zeal which has gone through death and is resurrected. Lots of zeal characterizes the first kind but not the second. We observe a number of brethren working diligently and ably, nonetheless their diligence and ability are of the first kind—the natural—and not of the second, for they have not passed through death. We cannot account it resurrection if we live before God in the power of these natural elements.

Some will ask, What is the body of Christ? The body of Christ is where the resurrection of Christ is attested. In other words, whatever is not of resurrection has no part, not even the slightest part, in the body of Christ. The church is not the place where you bring in something of your cleverness and I bring in something of my tactfulness. The church is not built by your contributing a little bit of some natural thing and my contributing a little bit of some other natural thing. The church shuts all the natural out and accepts only the resurrected. Whenever the natural enters, the church loses its character. There can be no unresurrected element in the church.

Many brethren ask how the church can be one. We ought to realize how futile it is to achieve unity through the human way. God's children need to know the cross and to deal with the flesh and the natural in order to arrive at oneness. No method is effective unless people experience Calvary. No problem in the church is solved by human maneuver and ingenuity. The church allows neither the flesh nor the natural, for both will damage her. It is quite true that the church requires the contributions and ministries of men; nonetheless, there must be the imprint of death upon them. Usefulness accompanied by the mark of death is called resurrection. The Lord is himself resurrection, and He desires to have a resurrection church.

Should we wish to have such an experience, then we must look to God for His working in our lives. Perhaps we are quite familiar with many teachings, yet without our receiving a basic blow from the Lord we shall remain the same. Sometimes we slip and fall. We feel the pain, yes; yet it only lasts a few days or a few months. But had we been given God's basic blow and been sufficiently broken, we would not be pained for merely a few days or a few months, we would sustain that wound throughout our life. We would forever be crippled before God, and the mark of the cross would always be upon us.

Many years after Paul had seen the vision on the Damascus road, he testified, "Wherefore . . . I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26.19). If the Lord has mercy upon us and severely strikes us one day, our old selves shall never be able to rise up again: the wound will remain in us forever. Since it is still possible to touch, in the resurrected Christ, the wound of the nailprints in His hands and of the spear in His side, such wounding should never disappear in the lives of all who today know the Lord as resurrection. Experiencing this wound, we will never more dare to boast of ourselves and of our power. Once beaten by the Lord, we shall rise no more. May the marks of the cross be increasingly evident in our lives.

Pretension is useless here. For what is put on by oneself will soon be forgotten. But once the sacrifice is placed on the altar and slain, it never rises again. If we have ever suffered this basic stroke, we will realize how unable, finished, and nothing we are. This death mark in us testifies to our knowledge of resurrection. Knowing the cross is knowing resurrection. What is left after the cross is resurrection. Oh! How many are the things which shall never rise again but are forever gone once they have passed through the cross. Only what can endure the cross possesses spiritual value. Whatever enters the grave and remains is a dead thing; but whatever comes out on the other side of the grave, yet bears the mark of the cross, is resurrection.

Let us pray that we may truly know Christ to be our resurrection as well as our life. May the Lord eliminate many of our things from us. May He not only cause us to have more of His life but also less of ourselves. How often we live according to the natural, neither knowing God's discipline nor the cross. We need to ask the Lord to be merciful to us that the natural may gradually be decreased in us while the resurrected may be increasingly manifested. May life and resurrection be realities—not theories—to us. Whenever we put forth our hand, may He show us that there is no resurrection in it since all that it performs is only natural and fleshly. May He expose our flesh by the light of resurrection. If we still cannot see, the Lord be merciful. Amen!

3

Christ Is the Bread of Life and the Light of Life

Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. (John 6.35)

Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8.12)

We have briefly mentioned how all spiritual things are in Christ. God has given Him to us to be all these things. This is a most essential point of understanding in spiritual life. Is our experience mere experience or is it Christ? Is our righteousness simply righteousness or is it Christ? Is our sanctification only sanctification or is it Christ? Is our redemption merely redemption or is it Christ?

Frequently we talk about the way, but that way may not be Christ himself. In like manner, we can speak of truth and of life without necessarily speaking of Christ. In brief, we have many things outside of Christ. This constitutes a formidable spiritual problem to God's children. We may confess with our mouth that Christ is the center of all things, nevertheless in our lives we have many matters other than Christ, as if these can help us to be Christians. How we need to have our mind renewed so as to understand that aside from Christ God has no intention for us to have many so-called spiritual things. According to God's arrangement, there *are* things; only, these things are Christ. For Christ is the sum of all spiritual things. Christ is our righteousness—He has not given us a righteousness. Christ is our sanctification—He has not granted us a thing called power to make us holy. Christ is our redemption—He has not offered us a redemption. Christ is the way—He has not opened to us another way in which to walk. Christ is the truth—He has not presented some truth before us for us to understand. Christ is the life—He has not conferred on us a thing called life.

Brothers and sisters, as we travel along God's course, we will discover more and more that of all God's grace there is only one grace, of all God's gifts there is only one gift. That grace is Christ, that gift is also Christ. Thank God, day after day He is showing us how Christ is all-inclusive. Formerly we thought of the Lord as our Savior; now we can say He is not only our Savior but also our salvation. Is this strange? No, this is fact. For we increasingly find out about Christ being the thing of God.

If we erroneously differentiate between what the Lord Jesus gives and what He is, between the gift and the giver, we shall suffer greatly in spiritual life. For such error will keep us from touching the source of life. In view of this, we wish to see more of Christ as our things. In John 6.35 and 8.12, the Lord tells us that He is the bread of life and also the light of life. Let us consider each of these in turn.

Christ Is the Bread of Life

"I am the bread of life," the Lord declares. He spoke this word to the people who sought Him in Capernaum. These expected Him to feed them with bread, so the Lord told them: "I am the bread of life." He it is who *gives* the bread of life, and He himself *is* that bread. The gift and the giver are one, not separate. Thank God, Christ is God's gift as well as He is the Lord who gives the gift.

What is the meaning of bread in the Bible? It means satisfaction, since the Scripture uses hunger to represent the dissatisfaction of man. For human dissatisfaction to be solved there needs to be bread. Whether God's children are able to finish the course before them or whether they have the strength to go on depends largely on their inward satisfaction. If we feel satisfied today, we will have the strength for the day. But if we sense emptiness within, as though like a tire that has blown out, we will not be able to drag ourselves on through the day. We cannot conclude that there is no life, though we certainly do not have strength. It is satisfaction—that inexplicable

feeling of satisfaction—which enables us to proceed and finish our course.

Let us now see what bread is for the children of God. “I am the bread of life.” The Lord Jesus maintains life as well as gives life. Many Christians think of food only in terms of an hour of prayer or an hour of Bible reading; they do not know that their food is the Lord Jesus himself. We are not saying that prayer or Bible reading is useless. But let us remember that the Lord Jesus says here that He is “the bread of life”—which means that the bread of life is none other than the Lord himself.

Often God’s children are not satisfied because they do not know Christ as the bread of life. We always meet hungry people who are discontented in spiritual matters. They are unhappy with everything, and from dawn till dark they are obsessed with dissatisfaction. We have no desire to persuade people to be arrogant or self-content. Yet we would maintain that pride with self-contentment is one thing while being fed and feeling satisfied is quite another thing. Some people, having been dealt with by God, live before Him in weakness and in trembling. They have not the slightest tinge of pride, yet they have touched the Lord, and thus they are fully fed. They are in possession of a satisfaction in the presence of God, and this satisfaction is their strength.

How, then, can we be fully fed and satisfied? We ought to know that all satisfactions are related to Christ. All satisfactions are to be found in life. Christ is the bread of life. Whenever we really touch life, we immediately obtain satisfaction. On the other hand, when we sin against life we instantly sense a blow-out. Let us illustrate this matter of obtaining satisfaction with some concrete instances.

Someone may say, “I have worked for over a year now. During this period I have kept myself most busy. I have run here and there. I have been so busy that I now feel quite empty within. I am very

hungry and do long to find a place for spiritual revival.” In reading John Chapter 4, though, we find a discrepancy with what this person has said. The Lord Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting by Jacob’s well. His disciples had gone to the city to buy food, indicating that the Lord must indeed be hungry. There He meets a Samaritan woman. It was the will of God that He should speak to her and save her. He does what God has willed Him to do. His disciples subsequently return with the food and request Him to eat. But He says to them, “I have food to eat which you do not know about.” They then think that someone else must have brought Him food. Consequently, He plainly tells them, “The food which I have is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work.”

From this incident in the life of our Lord we may conclude that work should make us full instead of empty and hungry. In spiritual work, each time we labor we feel full. If hunger follows each work, something must be wrong. Each time after laboring, if we sense weakness similar to a flat tire, we know something is wrong with that labor. For if we walk according to God’s will and not by ourselves, we should not feel flattened out but should feel strengthened instead. How frequently we undertake a work not because we are ready before the Lord but because the external need is very great and outside persuasion is so strong. In so working, we experience an inward shattering which will leave us strengthless after work. This is because something is wrong between us and the Lord. All labors outside God’s will cause us to become more hungry. We must therefore do God’s will in order to be satisfied.

We ought to realize that neither a spiritual retreat nor a Biblical teaching is our food; Christ alone is. Since Christ is our food, how can work to the point of emptiness followed by rest at some retreat to receive nourishment be the answer? How can we speak until exhausted, then try to obtain some new teaching to replenish the supply? Whether we are busy or not, it should be that each time we stand up to speak for Christ we are so full of words and strength

within that not only those who hear are fed but we who speak are sustained too. For it is the Lord who works in us. Having touched the Lord, we will not feel empty but instead feel full upon finishing our work. How mistaken we are if we regard rest or the hearing of a sermon or participation in a spiritual retreat as the means of being filled. To obtain food and spiritual nourishment is to allow the Lord to work out in us whatever He wishes to do. The Lord who dwells in us allows us to touch His life, and this alone causes us to feel full within.

In spiritual experience, it is not the leisurely who can eat; on the contrary, we eat more when we are busily occupied. We eat as we are busily engaged. If we are walking in the will of God, the more we are busy the more we eat. And hence, we will not be exhausted or feel empty through much toil.

We believe many brothers and sisters can bear witness to this truth. Suppose, for example, that you go out today to talk to another person. You may speak with great passion but the Lord makes no move in you. After you have spoken for five or ten minutes, to your great surprise you begin to sense that something is wrong. You soon wish to change the direction of your conversation for you realize you are not able to go on as before. With the result that you feel empty when you eventually must walk away. Nothing was wrong with your word or your attitude. You tried your best to help that person. Yet strangely you became emptier as you rambled on. When you finally had to walk away, you felt as though you had committed an enormous sin. At times you may perhaps have seen a little outward success, you may even have had the feeling that you had done all right; nevertheless, when these external feelings pass away, you sense great emptiness and hunger inside. How true, that whenever you move on your own, and in spite of some degree of outward success, you eventually feel like a punctured balloon.

Brothers and sisters, have you ever felt as though you had run out of air? If you walk according to your own thought instead of following the Lord with fear and trembling, however good your intention may be you will always end up as one out of air—having no spiritual punch. The more you work the less meaningful it is to you. The more you continue the emptier you feel. In such a situation you will feel the worse if you are at all praised. You just hate yourself. This demonstrates that such work is not food, since it does not satisfy you.

Those who know food find satisfaction in the Lord. For Christ is the bread of life; He alone can satisfy. If your work cannot touch Christ, you will feel hungry. But if you touch Him, you touch life and spiritual reality. Busy or not, you are able to say, “Thank and praise God, I have food to eat, for the Lord is my bread!” Beloved, do you see that the answer to the whole problem lies not in outward things such as where you go or what you do or which message you deliver or even how much time you spend in spiritual retreats; but that the solution lies in your touching the Lord inwardly. Whoever touches Him obtains satisfaction.

Some believers may say, “Since the Lord has not called me to preach or to work somewhere, how can I be satisfied? The preachers and the workers have the opportunities of being fed, but most people like me go hungry.” Praise God, such as these will not go hungry either. For should such believers perform even a little labor such as talk with others for ten or twenty minutes or converse with them in ten or twenty sentences, they will have unloaded a burden and have felt satisfied within if what they undertake is of the Lord and by His power within them. It is the Lord who gives burden, and now the burden is discharged. So believers will sense satisfaction and fullness afterwards. Whenever we touch God we get satisfaction, and thus we obtain food. For this reason, not only the workers have special opportunity to eat but everyone else as well has a chance to eat. Daily do we have occasion to eat, and so daily do we have

opportunity to be filled full. Christ is our food. If we touch Him, we have food.

Let us mention another, though deeper, instance. Oftentimes we do what we think is good and spiritual without knowing the Lord's mind, consequently we feel empty afterwards. It is only when we follow the Lord that we achieve satisfaction. Once a brother noticed another brother going astray. Time and again he felt he should point out to him in all plainness that this was not a way of edification but one of corruption. However, wishing to be a gentle Christian, he decided merely to exhort the wayward brother with smiling face and a few nice words. Surprisingly, when he discharged his burden in this manner he felt as if the bottom had dropped out of a barrel. From the human standpoint he seemed to have done well and quite successfully. His attitude had been gentle and harmless. But instead of being fed, he felt hungry.

Such a condition continued for two or three months. He knew something was wrong, therefore he asked the Lord to enlighten him and show him the cause. One day he prayed, "Lord, whatever You want me to do, I will do it accordingly." The Lord heard his prayer and showed him what he should do. For shortly thereafter that wayward brother came to see him, and this time he strongly reprimanded him. So far as his natural temperament was concerned, he always suffered for days whenever he uttered any strong words. On this occasion, however, the stronger he spoke the more he touched the Lord. So that after he had uttered this strong reproof, he had no need, as was the case before, to confess his sin; instead he could praise the Lord. He felt as though he had had a full meal. Now we do not mean to imply here that we may reprove people casually or carelessly; such would undoubtedly be wrong to do. The instance at hand only goes to show that if we do a thing according to the mind of the Lord, we will inwardly be fed and thus be strengthened.

From the above incident, we discover an important fact: that the good which one can do is not food. You may think it will be well if you are more gentle, yet experience tells us that even if you act gently, it is but the action of your outward man—and this cannot be your food. Only when the Lord moves within you, and you move in accordance with His will, will you have food. As you touch life, you get food; as you touch the Lord, you are satisfied.

Christ Is the Light of Life

The Lord not only says that He is “the bread of life”; He also declares: “I am the light of life.” Bread is for satisfaction, light is for seeing. Satisfaction gives strength while seeing affects walking. We have already seen how Christ is the bread of life. We shall now see how He is also the light of life.

First of all, let us point out that the light of life is not a knowledge of the Bible. Everybody knows Christians should read their Bible diligently. But if we read it as a book of knowledge or as a textbook of theology, we will get nothing but knowledge. We may be able to acquaint ourselves with some Bible doctrines which are accurate, yet these are only letters. At the time that our Lord was born in Bethlehem, many priests and scribes were extremely familiar with the books of the prophets; nonetheless, they did not recognize the Christ. Today the New Testament is added to the Old Testament. It is still possible for people to remember the letters of the Bible and yet not know Christ. Not for a moment do we suggest that we need not read the Scriptures; we simply stress that in reading the Word we may obtain knowledge without ever knowing Christ.

Many priests and scribes in the day of Christ had only a kind of dead knowledge; they did not know the living Lord. Many people mistake knowledge, doctrine, theology and teaching as the light of life. Some will even say they get light, though theirs is not necessarily the light of life. What they consider light is only some

interpretation regarding a certain passage of Scripture or a kind of teaching about the Bible. The real light is not mere knowledge. It is none other than the Lord himself. The Lord emphatically declares that He is the light of life.

Brothers and sisters, the experience of many confirms that what we see in the light of life is often something we are unable to utter. It sounds strange that we are able to see and yet are not able to explain. Once a person questioned a sister to ascertain whether or not she was saved. She replied: “Yes I am newly saved, yet I do not know how to explain it. But I do know I am saved. If you believe I am saved, I am saved; even if you do not believe I am saved, still I am saved.” Her words rang true. She was saved, yet she could not explain. She knew but she could not tell how. Hence, when one first sees the light he may not have many doctrines to tell; he may perhaps have to wait two or three years before he has some doctrines and teachings. This light is the Lord himself. Whoever sees Him sees light.

What, then, is the difference between seeing the light and not seeing the light? What kind of transformation will come over us if we see? The difference here is tremendous. If we have really seen light, we will fall to the ground. For light not only enlightens but also slays. Before Paul was enlightened, it would have been fairly difficult to cause him to fall down; as soon as he was stricken by the light, though, he was immediately flung to the ground. Some people force themselves to be humble: their words are humble, their manners are humble. Except that their kind of humility is very exhausting—both to themselves and to the onlookers. It is like a small child holding a big dictionary: though the book is not very heavy, it nonetheless drains the child’s strength. How hard it is for the proud to be humble! How difficult for us to fall down from the throne of pride! But when the light of the Lord shines, we instantly fall flat. We do not understand how; we only know light levels us.

Doctrine does not cause any to fall. One may listen to eight or ten messages and even memorize them; still, he remains the same. He can treat a message which ought to induce weeping or treat a word which ought to shatter man's natural life as a subject for painstaking research. Alas, in this case doctrine has become a thing, teaching has become a thing, word also has become a thing. These are all dead; there is no light.

Once a brother exulted over a message on Romans 6. He thinks he has now seen Romans 6. A few days later, though, he has a big quarrel with his wife. Such is the sorry story of man. His Romans 6 was only a thing—letters in a book. Therefore it was not light. Had he seen light, he would not have been able to act like his old self, for he would have been prostrated by that light.

Light is rigorous. It can do what man cannot himself do. What doctrine cannot do, what the help of brothers and sisters cannot do, and what our own effort cannot do, light can immediately accomplish. We may consider ourselves rather hard—but when light shines, we are softened. When John saw the light he became as one dead; so too with Daniel. No one is able to see the face of the Lord and not fall down. None can behold the Lord without becoming as one dead. It is difficult for us to die, it is hard for us to be humble, but as soon as light shines, these are done. The light which comes from the Lord has slaying power. It fells people as it shines.

The Lord Jesus himself is light. Consequently, whoever encounters Him sees and is fallen and weakened as though dead. Many possess a rough and tough character. They have never been broken by the Lord; neither themselves nor anybody else can deal with them. Then the light of the Lord shines on them. As soon as they see the light, they become broken vessels. A person who sees the Lord is definitely weakened and broken. No one is able to live after beholding the Lord. This is light.

Dear friends, never confuse light with many other things. What we usually call light is not necessarily light. Many are but doctrines or so-called “truths”. These have no spiritual effectiveness in us. There once was a brother who loved the Lord very much. One day a certain person met him and said to him: “I am so glad I have found the doctrine of sin in the book of Romans.” In reply he said, “My friend, how is it that only today have you discovered the doctrine of sin in Romans? I would think you should have found the fact of sin long ago in your own self.” Many are attempting to discover doctrine, but they have not found fact. It therefore remains as words and a dead matter. It is neither light nor life nor Christ.

The first effect of light is to slay. Do not think light comes only to cause us to see. Not so. When light dawns, it blinds our eyes. It does indeed cause us to see, but this is the latter effect. Light first blinds us and prostrates us before it ever enables us to perceive. That which cannot flatten us is not light; neither is that light which does not humble us. When Paul saw the light, he was smitten to the ground and for three days could see nothing with his eyes. Hence during the initial encounter with light, we shall instead be dazed. The moment one who dwells in darkness beholds the light, he will not be able to see at all.

May God have mercy upon those who are so self-righteous and self-conceited. For such people have never known light; all they possess are but doctrines and knowledge. Had they seen the true light, they would have confessed, “Oh Lord, what do I know! I know absolutely nothing!” The greater the revelation, the deeper the blindness; the stronger the light, the severer the stroke. Light will humble and fell us before it ever enables us to see. If we have not been smitten, humbled, dazed and reduced to nothing, we are by this fact proven to still be in darkness, possessing no light. May the Lord be merciful to us that by His light He may take away our self-reliance, so that we no longer dare to trust in our own knowledge and judgment. Oh that we may come to Him saying, “Lord, You are the

light. In seeing You, I now realize that what I have seen in the past have been but things.”

Light is not something abstract, it is something very substantial. The Lord Jesus is that light. With Him in our midst, we have light among us. How pitiful that many matters in the life of believers are too theoretical. They have heard countless abstractions which offer little practical help.

Once there was a brother who studied in a mission school while he was young. He often attended Christian services and heard about the doctrine of salvation, but he never met any saved person, nor was he saved. One day he met someone preaching the gospel. The preacher was a true Christian, and through his preaching that brother was saved. Formerly, all that he had heard had only been a few abstract teachings, and he therefore was not able to get saved. On this day, though, he met a truly born-again believer, and in that person he encountered something concrete. Hence he was saved.

One brother related the story of his studying the Bible. Said he: “After I had heard a good number of brothers and sisters talking about holiness, I decided to study the doctrine of holiness. I found in the New Testament over two hundred verses on the subject. I memorized them and arranged them in order. But I still did not know what holiness is; I felt so empty. This situation continued until one day I met an elderly sister who was truly a holy woman. That day my eyes were opened to see what holiness is: for I had met a person who was holy. How terrible was that light. It caused me much pain. It did not afford me any way of escape. It showed me what holiness is.”

From these experiences we may come to understand that light is concrete, living, and effective. If doctrine is what we preach, doctrine will be received by people; but this is a dead object, not the light of life. If the light of life is what we dispense, it will not only enlighten people’s life, it will also be shone through them. We must realize that

since light was concrete and practical in the life of our Lord Jesus, it ought to be the same in our lives. Being a living Person the light of life quickens us when it is revealed.

Friends, why is it that after many days the truth of God seems to lose its power, becoming so weak that it cannot touch us? For no other reason than that it has become too much doctrine, too much theological knowledge! We need to recognize that only the living Lord can beget living people. We look to God to be truly merciful to us, enabling us more and more to see that *things* are all dead but that the Lord alone is living. The most attractive and spiritual things in Christianity—if they are outside of Christ—are but dead. We should let the Lord himself be this thing or that thing to us. Then it is living. It is living both in us and in those who receive from us. May the Lord be gracious to us that we may be cast to the ground before the Lord and know Him far differently.

4

Christ Is God's Everything

On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! (John 1.29)

Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. (John 6.35)

Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. (John 6.53)

Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8.12)

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. (John 8.24)

Jesus therefore said, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he. (John 8.28)

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life. (John 11.25)

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14.6)

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. (1 Cor. 1.30)

Christ, who is our life. (Col. 3.4)

Christ Jesus our hope. (1 Tim. 1.1)

Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Ps. 27.1)

Christ Is Both God's End and God's Means

God's end is Christ, so also God's means is Christ. It is through Christ to Christ. What we may learn before God concerning His purpose is especially opened up to us in Ephesians and Colossians. Let us now view God's purpose by looking into these two books. However, let us note that there is one distinction between them. In Ephesians, we are shown how, according to God's predestined purpose, He has so arranged that at the fullness of the times He is to sum up all things in Christ—both things in the heavens and things upon the earth. Colossians, on the other hand, reveals further that God has not only caused Christ to have first place in everything but even more, Christ is to be all and in all. Hence Colossians discloses to us Christ as the means as well as the end of God. God's end is to let Christ have the first place in all things. In order to realize that goal, God must have Christ as all things. Only by His being all things and dwelling in all things can Christ sum up all things both in the heavens and upon the earth. If Christ is all, naturally all things are summed up in Him. If He dwells in all, what else can all things be?

Remember that in God's eye there is only Christ, not things. He sees neither affairs nor things, He only beholds Christ. The affairs and things which we usually think of are non-existent in the view of God. Today we probably reckon that there are lots of things and affairs in the world. According to our worldly viewpoint, there are affairs here and matters there; but according to God's estimate Christ is all. Consequently there is neither affair nor thing. Christ is all and He is in all. And that will be the day when the eternal purpose of God shall be fulfilled.

I hope you might realize one thing, which is, that Christ will sum up all things in himself. This has already begun to occur today in the church; it need not be something that begins only in the future, nor only becomes true when God's eternal purpose is finally reached.

God is presently opening our eyes to see that in the church Christ is both affairs and things. The church begins to understand this, and the church commences to live in this spiritual world. If the church still sees things and affairs, it merely proves she has yet to behold Christ. But of course, the things and affairs which we mention here do not refer simply to matters and affairs of this world; they point especially to spiritual matters and spiritual affairs.

John's Gospel Reveals Christ as God's Everything

It is rather surprising to find that John sets down many words not found in the other Gospels. The Gospel of John is the most profound of all the Gospels as well as it is the last written. It was written after all the rest of the New Testament had been composed. Other Gospels and many Epistles had already appeared, but at the very last, John came forth to present his Gospel. In it there is finally shown to us what God's estimate of Christ is and in it we are told how we ought to know Christ as God knows Him.

Here do we understand that what God requires is not a lamb, nor is what He gives the bread of life. We also come to understand that God does not provide the way, the truth, and the life, neither does Christ merely use His power to restore man's life or man's sight. In the whole of John's Gospel we see only one monumental fact, which is, that Christ is *all* these things. He says He is the light of the world—He does not say He is able to give people light. He says He is the bread of life—He does not say He will give us the bread of life. He says He is the way—He does not say He will guide us to walk in the way. He says He is the truth—He does not say He will teach us a truth. He says He is true life—He does not say He will give us a life. When Lazarus died Christ did not tell Mary and Martha He had the power to raise up their brother; instead He declared that He is the resurrection.

Please note that the bread of life is a thing, so too is the light, the way, the truth, the life, the resurrection, or the lamb. But in Christianity there are no things—only Christ! This is the whole of the matter. What we need to comprehend before God is that in our experience there is neither thing nor affair but only Christ: not that He gives us light, but that He is our light; not that He leads the way, but He is the way; not that He gives us a life, but He is our life; not that He teaches a truth, but He is the truth. Brethren, do you grasp the difference here? Whatever Christ gives is His very own self.

One day I was talking to a group of people about this spiritual fact. As I spoke, many eyes stared at me. I told them I would present a most significant fact to them; namely, that God's Christ is God's everything, for God has nothing else but Christ! God has not given us light, He gives Christ to us; God has not given us food, He gives Christ to us; God has not given us the way, the truth, and the life, instead He gives us Christ. God's Christ is all things; aside from Him God has nothing.

What Paul Understands—That Christ Is Our Hope

I wish you to see that Paul later on says the same thing as did our Lord Jesus. He knows the Lord well and he unveils some marvelous facts. First of all, he says to Timothy, "Christ Jesus (who is) our hope." I love to read this particular word. How about you? He does not say our hope is in Christ Jesus; he instead asserts that Christ Jesus is our hope. It is not a pinning our hope on Christ, expecting to be *given* hope by Him; rather is it Christ himself our hope.

—That Christ Is Our Life

Then too, Paul writes to the Colossians in the following manner: "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested." Says Paul, "Christ is our life." Instead of saying, When Christ is revealed, he

says, When Christ *our life* is revealed. Do you now see that a Christian has nothing but Christ?

—That Christ Is Our Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption

One of the most popular Scripture verses used in our preaching is 1 Corinthians 1.30 which states that “of (God) are ye in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God, both righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (literal). God has not given us righteousness, He gives Christ to us since Christ is our righteousness. God has not given us sanctification, He gives us Christ because Christ is our sanctification. God has not given us redemption, He gives us Christ because Christ is our redemption. God has not given us wisdom, He gives us Christ inasmuch as Christ is our wisdom. It is for this reason that we say God’s Christ is God’s everything. God’s Christ is God’s thing and affair; aside from Him God has neither thing nor affair.

Suppose God tells us today that He will make the Lord Jesus our justifier. How would we think? We would say, He indeed is our justifier. But according to Paul’s writing here God has not made the Lord Jesus our justifier. God causes Him to be our justification. Is not this exceedingly good? Christ is our righteousness.

Neither does God say here through Paul that the Lord Jesus is to be our sanctifier. Instead He says that the Lord Jesus is sanctification. Christ does not come to sanctify us, He comes to be himself our sanctification. Our sanctification is not a thing, an action, or a behavior. Our sanctification is a person, even Christ.

Nor does God assert that the Lord is our redeemer, but He says that the Lord is our redemption. Does this sound foreign to our ears? For Paul does not say that God has set the Lord Jesus to be the redeemer, he declares instead that the Lord Jesus is redemption.

Thank God, Christ is our redemption as well as our redeemer. He is our sanctification as well as our sanctifier. He is our righteousness as well as our justifier. He is our wisdom as well as the one who makes us wise.

What David Comprehends—That Christ Is Our Salvation

If I were to tell you the Lord Jesus is our savior, I believe you would all respond with “Truly, the Lord Jesus is our savior.” Is it not rather unusual that Psalm 27.1 declares that “Jehovah . . . is my salvation”? We know the Lord is our savior, for this is factual to us. But God shows David that the Lord is our salvation. The Lord Jesus is both our savior and our salvation. That which God gives to us is the Lord Jesus himself.

Living Christianity Has Only One Person

Probably you will ask me, Why do you lay such stress on this point? Because here lies the difference between living Christianity and dead Christianity. The distance between these two ways is incalculable. One is spiritual, while the other is not spiritual. One is of God, but the other is of man’s invention. Let me say this: that when you have studied God’s word carefully, you will discover that in the Bible there is only a Person, not a thing. And that Person is the Lord Jesus. You cannot find anything except that Person.

A colossal problem exists among God’s children today. The Christianity which they know is quite fragmentary. You obtain a little grace, I receive a little gift, and he speaks a little tongue. This man experiences some change in his conduct, that man possesses some measure of love; this one has patience, that one has humility. This is what is commonly known as Christianity. But is *this* Christianity? It is not, for Christianity is Christ. Christianity is not

reward, neither is it what Christ gives to me. Christianity is none other than Christ himself.

Do you perceive the difference? These are two totally divergent ways. Christianity is not any one thing which Christ gives to me; Christianity is Christ giving himself to me. Here is the problem, that people consider today's Christianity to be the endowment of Christ. When I was a sinner, Christ endowed me with grace and mercy. Now that I have become a Christian, He endows me with patience and humility and gentleness and whatever. But this is just not so.

Nothing Impersonal in Christianity

Before God it is not a matter of the endowment of Christ; rather, it is God giving Christ himself to us. God has not granted us humility and patience and gentleness, He grants the entire Christ to us. It is Christ who becomes our humility, patience, gentleness. It is Christ, the living Lord. And this is what is truly called Christianity.

Please take note that there is nothing at all impersonal in Christianity. You cannot find any impersonal element in it. Every matter in Christianity has to do with personality, and the person involved is Christ. To put it another way, our patience is not a thing, ours is a Person—our sanctification is not an experience, ours is a Man—our justification is not a thing, ours is a Personality—our righteousness is not a behavior, ours is a Being. When we are redeemed and delivered, we do not obtain items as such, for our redemption and deliverance are alive. Our patience, our humility, our gentleness, our love, and so on are the Lord himself, not things. And this is what Christianity really is. In a believer's life today Christ is already all, and needs no waiting until a future day.

Many will ask how we can say Christ is all? Let me tell you that if you truly know a living Christianity you would have no trouble acknowledging Christ as all. Not that He gives all, but that He is all.

Perhaps a problem arises—that so many of God’s children suffer considerable defeat. This is due to the fact that what they get before God is gift instead of Christ. They receive from God many fragmentary items but they have not obtained the Christ of God. They possess objects and things but not a “Person”. I wonder how much we really see. I can categorically state that the solution to this problem answers all other problems.

At the time we were saved we heard God’s word declare that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3.16). We felt the need of being saved. We therefore went to God and prayed, “Lord, You have loved me and given Yourself to me. Will You not also give me salvation? You have become my Savior, will You not now give me salvation too?” How foolish we are to ask for salvation as though the Savior is not sufficient enough. This is nonetheless exactly what many are doing.

What is the gospel we preach? We announce that God has given us the Savior. But when we repent and pray we say, “God, give me salvation.” Let me tell you, God has but one Son, and this Son is your salvation. In having the Savior you have the salvation. Why do you still beg for the latter? Only the fool will plead, “Since You have become my Savior, now give me salvation also.”

“I AM.”

Today we are Christians. We are saved, and God has given Christ to us to be our life. Nevertheless, we are continually asking God for one thing, two things, three things, ten things, fifty things, a hundred things, ten thousand things, a million things, a billion things. We think these actually count. But God shows us that Christ is our all.

It is for this reason that God reveals in His word that Christ's name is "I AM". We need to understand and experience more of this blessed name.

Getting Food

In the Gospel according to John the Lord says, "I am the bread of life." We ask for bread, taking it as a thing. We are so hungry that we plead with God to give us bread if He wills. Most surprisingly, all who ask for bread never get it; and hence they remain hungry. Now I have not served the Lord too long a time, but I have served Him enough years to be able to say that I have never met anyone asking for bread who got it. You may perhaps retort: Can God's word be wrong? Has not God said that "he satisfieth the longing soul, and the hungry soul he filleth with good" (Ps. 107.9)? My answer is, indeed, "the hungry he hath filled with good things" (Luke 1.53); but what are these good things which are food to the hungry? We should know that what satisfies us before God is not bread but Christ. How often we feel hungry and empty within; believing there is supply with God, we pray and expect food. We do not know how we can get the food. All we know to do is to draw nigh to the Lord more, to believe and receive more of Him and to enjoy Him more. What surprises us is, that though we do not get the food we expect, we are nonetheless satisfied. We do not obtain the food we imagine, but due to our nearness to the Lord we are satisfied by believing and accepting Him. For God's food is Christ. It is not a thing called food, but Christ as food. The Chinese have a proverb: one for all. This can surely be applied to the things of God. Whatever thing we may ask of Him, God always gives us Christ—the one for all.

My Righteousness and Holiness

I always rejoice and feel like praising God for the simple reason that my righteousness is not my own conduct but is a person, even

the Lord Jesus. Since my righteousness is the Lord Jesus, therefore not only can I say I have this or that righteousness but also I can talk to my righteousness and praise and give glory to my righteousness. How does this sound to you? You may perhaps wonder how I can give glory to my righteousness. Yet I often give glory to my righteousness, for my righteousness is the Lord Jesus. Neither is my holiness my own behavior. I frequently praise my holiness. I am not asserting that I praise my own behavior. On the contrary, I hate my own conduct. Nevertheless I can praise my holiness, because my holiness is my Lord. How utterly contrary are these two: the one is a thing while the other is the Lord.

God's Destroying and Building

In our spiritual experience we discover one fact. After being Christians for several years or for several decades we find ourselves more irritated than when we first believed. I recall a number of people telling me how in the beginning they were quite able to be patient, forgiving, and prayerful, but that now they no longer can. Formerly they could put up with any treatment they might possibly receive in schools, homes, or offices, but that in the present hour they are unable to do so any more. Even though their ill-temper does not explode on every occasion, their inward thought is nonetheless to have revenge. Such cases are too numerous to count. Many have told me how they are no longer humble, patient, gentle, loving, or zealous as they once were.

Brethren, just keep in mind that God must take every *thing* away. For when we first believed in the Lord we asked God for love when we sensed the need of it. May I say it—and here I will apply “baby talk” to the situation—that God in that instance gave us a dose or a bag of love that we then might love. Love here was an object, though we might have received quite a lot of it. But let me say that God will never allow love to be a thing in our lives forever. He must

eventually make Christ our love. And in order to do that He has to take that object or thing called love away from us. Many, being of bad or quick temper before they trusted the Lord, consider patience a gift, a salvation, a thing in itself. If only they have this, then everything will be all right. It may go well with them for one or two years, but by the third or fifth year it has fizzled out.

God performs a similar type of work to this in the lives of many of His children. He will remove everything away, not only the things of the world but spiritual things as well. Before we were saved, worldly objects and affairs usurped the place of Christ; but after being saved, *spiritual* objects and affairs now tend to occupy Christ's place. Hence God must show us one day that "Christ is my world." Earlier He took from us the things of this world; presently He is taking away our spiritual thing or things. He removes our personal patience, love, power, gentleness, humility. Indeed, He removes all, that we may not live by these good things but live by a Person instead. We are patient not because we have received a power to be so, but because we have got a Person. So is it with humility and the rest: not a power but a Person.

It is for this very reason that God engages in a destroying work daily in the lives of His children that He may also do the work of a daily building up. Daily destroy things and daily build up Christ. This is God's way with His children. Let me tell you that in bygone days God seemed to give you a gift, a power by which to be patient; so that you almost thought your problem of being patient was solved. You then turned to deal with humility, and again God appeared to give you a gift, a power by which to be humble, so that you began to feel your problem of humility was settled. Next you realized yet another problem in your life, for which you asked of God a solution. Each day you tried to solve one or two problems—yet what you were doing was solving fractional problems.

Brethren, God will take away all things in order to give you one Person who is to be simultaneously your humility, your patience, your gentleness, and your love. For Christ is all. And this is what Christianity actually is. God builds incessantly until finally even this universe must confess that Christ is indeed all. Today God desires to work out in us this confession that Christ is all.

Excuse me for referring to myself for a moment. I am concerned and also entrusted with the spiritual life of a number of people. Often I see someone whom I feel needs help, and I will exhort him by saying, "Brother, you lack love. Next time you should show love to your brother." So I encourage him to love. Suppose he listens to my word and succeeds in loving his brethren. We will consider him a good brother and be comforted by the effectiveness of our labor. However, what this brother attains to is love, not Christ. Love to him is not a Person, it is merely a thing—a facet of human behavior. This I call a behaving Christianity because it consists of exhibiting certain aspects of human behavior. It is man who is working, asking, expecting, praying, believing, receiving, waiting and succeeding with respect to this matter of love. Because of this, I say that love in his life is but a thing, a mark of behavior. This is totally different from love being Christ. Love is Christ, not I. It is Christ, not I, who loves. For then it becomes a law of life instead of a behavior of will. What a distinct Christianity this is!

I wonder if you have grasped hold of this? How do you feel when you help a brother to go on with God and learn later that he is still occupied with the things in Christianity? He has yet to know Christ and how Christ is God's everything.

Further Knowing

Let me explain further what is meant by knowing Christ. It means knowing Christ in things and affairs. What can this denote? It denotes knowing Christ as your things and affairs. Some are able to

say they know Christ as their patience. This is reckoned as knowing Christ. Others may know Christ as their love; still others know Christ as their humility. Such knowledge will effect a drastic change in life. Henceforth you are able to say that there is no thing in your life. I trust some of you can make this statement, for you recognize what it really means. In your world, even your spiritual world, there is nothing but Christ. For instance, you have no holiness except Christ. This does not imply, of course, that you are not holy, only that Christ is now your holiness. Immediately you comprehend that Christ is all. Hereafter you may be completely delivered from these outward matters. The whole approach is a matter of knowing Christ, not a matter of prayer or exhortation or encouragement.

I wish all servants of the Lord would take note of this fact: that it is neither exhortation nor encouragement but a living knowledge of Christ. In encouraging people, you can only stir them to self-action. But when God opens their eyes, they will know Christ; this alone is effective. Words such as these may be repeated for a hundred times without any result, until God opens our eyes to see that Christ is what we really seek. Many people know Him as the Lord who justifies them, nevertheless they are afraid of God because they do not know Christ as their righteousness. Many know the Lord Jesus as their sanctifier, yet they are wanting in holiness before God. Why? Because they only seek for holiness. Since the Lord is sanctifier, they will ask Him to give them strength to be holy. As they proceed on this course, though, they soon discover their inability to be holy. Only after God opens their eyes and gives them light to see that *Christ* is their holiness—and not their desire for holiness nor God's granting them power to be holy—is their difficulty surmounted, for Christ has then become holiness in them. Let me tell you that we may lose power but we can never lose Christ. Our holiness rests not on what we do but on what He is to us. When we know Him as all, all our problems are solved. I therefore have no other message than this: Christ is all.

Here is the trouble: I know many people who know Christ as their Lord but do not know Him as their things and affairs. If we only perceive Christ as “er” and not as “tion” we only know His acts but not His own self. We may know Him as redeemer, sanctifier, and justifier, yet God wants us to know Him as redemption, sanctification, and justification.

Do you know the Lord Jesus as your savior, or as your salvation? your redeemer or your redemption? your liberator or your liberation? your sanctifier or your sanctification? your justifier or your justification? To know Him as “er” is primary knowledge; to know Him as “tion” is further and deeper knowledge.

Today there are too many things in the lives of God’s children. All shall be well if one day we know that “He is”, and that thus all things have turned out to be one Person. God’s eternal purpose is hereby realized.

As long as our sanctification, redemption, regeneration, power, grace and gift remain as objects, we are still standing on the borderline of Christianity. But when we see these not as things but the Lord himself, we begin to know God and enter into God’s eternal purpose. Hereafter it is always He, never things.

It is because of this that I mentioned at the outset that the things which many people have are dead. Once they realize this, their things will take up personality and turn out to be Christ. For my regeneration is not a thing; it has a Personality. Christ whom I have is a person, not a thing. All that I have has personality because the Lord is all. One day He led me to know Him, now He further leads me into knowing Him as everything to me. Thus am I delivered out of my own life as well as out of the things of the spiritual world. Hereafter I can truly say that the Lord is all and in all. I can testify that in my daily living He is all. If today I am patient, it is not I but He who lives in me who is patient. If today I love, it is not because I

try my best to love, for the power of love is not in me; but it is because there is One who loves in me. If today I forgive, it is not due to my generosity or effort or ability, it instead is purely due to the One who lives in me and always forgives. Indeed, He is my forgiveness. If today I am humble, this does not happen because I remind myself how proud I am and that therefore I need to be humble. My humility does not come through suppressing my pride or through determining to be humble; it is the Person in me who so humbles. Since *He* is my humility, I therefore am humble. This is called the law of life. What is the law of life? It is none other than Christ becoming our life as well as things.

Consequently, brothers and sisters, I wish us all to ask God to open our eyes that we may actually see that sooner or later all things will pass away but that what remains will be Christ. Therefore, let Christ be all today.

Nothing but Christ

5

Jesus therefore said, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he. (John 8.28)

For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory. (Col. 3.3-4)

For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross: through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. (Col. 1.16-20)

Man's Concept and Request

The gift which we receive from God's hand is His Son, Jesus Christ. Yet quite varied is the understanding of many concerning the Lord Jesus. If you would allow me to say it, among God's children some consider the Lord Jesus as one of God's many gifts while others appreciate Him as God's only gift. Some receive the Lord Jesus as their first gift, for they believe there are many gifts besides Him—gifts which may run into the thousands or ten thousands in number; whereas others confess the Lord Jesus to be *the* gift of God, that is, He is God's sole gift.

Many are saved when they first receive the Lord Jesus. Later, they learn they still have many deficiencies and needs. Some may discover that their quick temper persists even after they are saved;

others notice that their pride follows them; while still others may find that their cowardice remains with them.

In the experience of God's children it is often observed that after being saved many are asking, expecting, believing, and praying before God concerning many, many gifts which they duly receive. And they number Christ among the ranks of these many gifts, viewing Him as but one, though admittedly the first and foremost, of God's gifts.

It is quite surprising that we notice our needs when we commence to follow the Lord. Yet are we not already Christians? Why then should we be in need? Yet this is how we in fact feel. We are new Christians but with deficiencies. Whatever our deficiencies may really be, they are not proper; we therefore strive to deal with them.

We pray and hope, believe and desire, and furthermore, we get what we need. And it certainly feels good when we have overcome our special deficiency. Our heart rejoices over the fact that we have obtained a gift.

Now in this kind of situation many of God's children view God's gift and grace as that which replenishes our want. Indeed, a number of people will probably say, what else is God's grace for if it is not to fill up our lack? I have here a Bible with one thousand pages. I am missing the page which asks God to replenish me with His grace (if there in fact be such a page). In other words, what I lack is only bits and pieces, but I will be complete when that piece is filled in. Some people need five pieces for they lack five pieces; others need ten pieces because that is what they lack. My personal love is probably almost perfect, though it will be even better if a little humility and a little patience are added. I may still need these bits but I shall be perfected after these are supplemented. Man's concept is always a matter of lack or want; consequently, he usually asks God for that particular supply.

Hence the situation is as follows. What we lack and ask for are all things, objects which can be counted in number. We declare we are wanting in this or that, and if only God will replenish it, we then will be all right.

Suppose we lack patience. just exactly what kind of patience are we expecting to have? Our eyes rarely look up to heaven for our standard; on the contrary, we usually look around us: "What a pity I am not as good as Mr. So-and-So! He is so patient, while I am so ill-tempered. He is so gentle, whereas I am so proud. Would that I could be as patient and as gentle as he." Some time ago, it being the first instance that I prayed after my salvation, I asked God to give me a Bible like the one a certain brother had. We so often can only pray for what we have seen concerning others. We are unable to ask for something from heaven which we have never seen. We therefore pray for patience or humility such as a certain someone else has. We have already pictured in our mind what humility or patience is.

May I ask you a hypothetical question? Would you be happy if soon after believing on the Lord God would take the patience of a certain person and deposit it within you? You would most likely consider yourself perfect and fully satisfied by such an addition.

You view patience as a thing, that which another possesses. Since there is such a trait called patience among brothers and sisters, you too desire to have that trait. Frequently you descend into hating yourself because you were ill-conceived with such a bad temper. How nice it would be were you only to have that thing which the other person has. For this reason, many of God's children admire patience as a thing; that is to say, they long for something such as a controlled temper. To them patience is a thing which God has, which some people on earth have, but which they do not possess. Their pressing need is to have patience added to them, thus making them patient people too.

Quite candidly speaking, here lies the basic difference between real and faulty Christianity. Many of God's people are seeking something which seems to be everywhere else except in their own lives. They notice that so-and-so here, and so-and-so there, and so-and-so somewhere else have it, but they do not. Hence they look for a thing, for something existing on the earth. Such is the common notion in Christianity. People pursue and then possess some item. They rejoice and are thankful for the thing they get.

Christ Alone

What most people fail to recognize is that in the spiritual realm there is nothing but Christ. There is no patience nor humility nor light in the spiritual world; these things do not exist. It is Christ and Him alone.

In view of this we need to have a further work of God done in our lives. When we were first saved we were shown that what we needed was Christ, not works. We were saved through Christ and not by our efforts. Just as similar a drastic and thorough revelation should we have in our present concern; namely, that what we need is Christ, not things. Just as there were many matters eliminated when we first believed, so many more matters must be totally wrecked today. The only difference being, that what was first destroyed were sins, while what is later to be demolished are spiritual things. It was at the first that our pride, jealousy, vainglory, ill-temper, or some other sin(s) were destroyed; today our patience, humility, and self-styled holiness must also be destroyed in order that we may understand that Christ is our life and our all. How vastly opposite is this Christianity from the Christianity which people usually conceive of.

A number of brothers and sisters often come to talk with me and to ask me many questions. You may be among that number who may consider yourself to be better than many other people, but I am fearful lest you remain the same throughout your life, because what

you have in yourself are but things. As regards patience, you are truly very patient; as regards humility, you are surely quite humble; you are very bright in performing tasks and quite good in your conduct. You have love and are always willing to help and to forgive. According to the standard of man, where else can one ever find such a good Christian? Even so, I must tell you straightforwardly that what you have in yourself are mere things. You ought to realize before God that that which is spiritual is not a thing but is the Lord Jesus Christ: not what you have, nor what you can do, nor yet what you can get, but only what Christ is. Except He becomes that thing in your life, nothing else is of any spiritual worth. In the spiritual world, there is nothing but Christ since He is God's everything.

Whoever Touches Christ Touches Life

It may be of help here if we touch upon some practical experience. Permit me to relate a little out of my personal experience. Several days ago something happened in a brother's home. According to duty, I naturally should visit him; for unless one decides against being a Christian, he naturally should desire to be a compassionate person. If I were to go see him, I might be able to help on the one hand by sharing with him something of my personal feeling, and on the other hand by saving him countless troubles in the future. So I started on my way to visit that brother. However, the farther I walked the chillier I became within until there was no more spirit left in me. Immediately I realized it was again I who wished to do something compassionate. I was trying to perform an act of loving the brethren, yet I had already touched death. The act was both commendable and right, but it was not Christ because I was doing it. What would be the consequence if *I* undertook the task? The answer: inward death, inward freeze. I may have initiated a commendable act, but I did not meet life. It was no doubt an act of compassion, yet I could not find the Lord in it. All that could be said was that I had been

compassionate. Allow me to reiterate that each time you touch Christ, and not conduct, you touch life. Were you only to touch conduct you would surely die, since it is you who are doing it.

We should understand that Christianity is Christ, and the life of a Christian is also Christ. Do not pile up a thousand good items and view that heap as Christian life. Were you able to gather up all the humilities on earth as well as assemble tens of thousands of other good traits, you still could not create a Christian. All that can be seen is a chain of things; one cannot see Christ.

Some years ago my fellow-workers frequently teased me about my attempt to save face. I wished to save the face of others as well as my own. I did not like to expose another's affairs; I would not have individuals leave my home feeling hurt; and I was most reluctant to embarrass anyone. If anybody should feel uneasy, I was that way long before. I wanted to be a gentle person. Nevertheless, oftentimes in my contact with this or that brother I sensed death—instant death, without any touch of life—when I tried to be a good and tender person towards him. There could be only one explanation for it: this tenderness was a thing, the product of my own effort. It was not Christ, hence I died instantly. I had touched a dead body; I was weakened within. There was left no strength in me, and so I was finished inwardly.

This, then, is the gist of the whole matter. As we live before God, we experience death when we only see a thing. If what we have is merely a thing we immediately touch death, because Christ is not in it. Had we touched Christ, we would at once have touched life, since He himself is life.

The Tree of Life Is Living

We are frequently reprov'd in our work. I suppose we all know that those of us who serve God always wish to do more for Him.

Now to serve God is basically an excellent and correct undertaking. Very often it requires us to suffer, to sacrifice, to spend and be spent. Nonetheless, many a time in our service we cannot touch life, we instead feel we have touched death. Our inside begins to be weakened, and we are inwardly censured as being wrong. At what point in time did we go wrong? It is at the moment when we conceive the idea that we will so work for God that we are weakened and inwardly reprimanded. Oh, it is altogether possible to receive severer reproof in our “doing good” than in our “doing evil”!

How many people believe the Lord will rebuke us only when we sin! May I suggest that He who dwells in us will often chide us when we do good. For the principle before God is not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it is the tree of life. The knowledge of good and evil is inadequate, since the issue is a matter of life. On the day that one eats the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he must die. The tree of life alone is living.

Two Kinds of Christian Life

There exist two kinds of life among the children of God: one kind is full of things while the other kind is Christ. In appearance they look almost alike. Hence it is extremely difficult to locate their differences. Both may speak of humility, gentleness, love, or forgiveness. They are hardly distinguishable outwardly. Even so, the one is but a chain of things, whereas the other is Christ himself. How completely distinct they are inwardly.

The Cross for Christ

Let me state it quite bluntly: if yours be things, you do not need the cross; but if yours be Christ, you learn to have the cross. The cross not only interdicts our sin, it also inhibits our activity. It curbs our action as well as checks our sin. Many difficulties arise just at

this point—that God’s children consider it well if they do good, yet they fail to realize that their good is merely a thing. In the presence of God the whole issue is Christ. Christ is that good thing, Christ is the life. If *He* remains quiet, how can we move? We can easily utter many comforting words, but if *He* does not speak we ourselves dare not speak. For if we do we will touch death, and thus are we inwardly weakened and shattered. We may without effort help people in many concerns and earn the praise of men as being tender-hearted; yet when we set about to perform these helps we immediately feel deflated within.

Herein do we see the cross: that whatever matters we may accomplish by *our* doing good does not require the cross; it is only when we allow the Lord to live in our lives so that He may be our things and our all do we need the cross. If He makes no move, how can we move? Oh how we need to ask God to deliver us from our good works just as we ask Him for deliverance from our sins. How often it is relatively easier to be delivered from sin (since sin is condemned) than to be delivered from the natural life (since to many the latter is neither condemned nor rejected).

Christ Is Healing

What does it really mean to us when we say that Christ is our things? What does such a statement really convey to us? I think we may learn a good lesson from our physical body. Many people, physically feeble, pray concerning healing. Here we may distinguish three different concepts of faith. Some believe God is their physician; others believe God can give them healing and health; while still others believe God is their healing.

When people contract some physical ailment or trouble, what do they seek after? They expect God to be their physician. Since God is the living God, He can touch the body with His power and heal it. If such be the case, let me tell you that their God is as distant from

them as is their own physician. I wonder whether you have really taken in what I have just said? Many anticipate God to be their physician, yet they seem to forget that just as far as an earthly physician is distant from his patients, so far is God distant from them too.

Others may perhaps show better understanding, for they look to God for healing and health. One day God gives healing, and so they get well. Many are praying and looking for healing. Nevertheless, there are still many feeble bodies lying around. Why is this? Because in expecting God to be a physician or to heal, believers are still seeking for something external.

Sometimes God in fact does heal, for this is His way in treating little children. To a person who newly believes, God may be willing to be his physician or to grant healing. But after he has trusted the Lord for a time this believer will be in God's hand for education and training. God will neither be his physician nor give him healing, because He reserves the very best for His excellent ones. God wants to be his healing: not to bestow healing, but to *be* the healing: not merely as the God who heals, but more so as God the healing. God *is* my healing. For the lack of adequate expression, I can only reverently say, before God, that Christ is our healing.

Countless people take healing as an object, as something outside of Christ. As long as He heals, all is fine. Recall the woman who had a hemorrhage (see Luke 8.43ff). She indeed touched Christ, but what then does the Bible say? Christ was aware that power had gone out of Him. It was Christ himself who had gone out. Not that He was doing the work of healing, but that He went out as the healing. When He goes forth as healing, people get healed.

How often are we able to look up, in spite of continued weakness and physical pains, and say: "Lord, I do not expect *You* to be my physician and walk off after the sickness is healed; neither do I look

to You for healing as a thing granted me for my temporal enjoyment but with Yourself walking away. Lord, I want *You* to be my healing. If physician, the Physician who dwells in me; if healing the healing with a Personality.” My healing does have a Personality; it is one Person who becomes my health. God is my health, Christ is my health. Do you see the difference? How very distinct they are. One day as we learn this lesson we shall get more than healing as a thing, because we have a Person who becomes the life of our body. Instantly all the other problems are solved. For it is now a relation between our body and the Lord. If anything happens between us and the Lord, our body will suffer the consequence of it. Our everything is up to the Lord. We can do nothing but wait on Him. This is quite opposite from healing as a thing.

Thank God, I have received healing numerous times. I am able to tell you how on a certain date I was sick and how on another definite date I was healed by God. I can relate many incidents about healing. The more I reckon up these incidents, the greater their number grows. Yet all these instances are only small healings, being case histories which can be enumerated. However, I can present you with another incident, that on a particular day in a particular month of a particular year God opened my eyes to see that Christ is my healing. *This* cannot be repeated, nor can it be numbered. It is once and for all. It is not a case but a Person or a personified healing. My healing now has Personality. Christ is my healing forever. Praise the Lord, this is a fact. To have the Lord heal me and to have Him as my healing are two totally diverse roads. The one is a thing while the other is a Person.

May I remind you that though Paul did not obtain the healing he nonetheless was healed. Can you notice the difference here? In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul tells us that he did not obtain healing as a thing, yet in his life he has One who continues to be his healing. Though his weakness persists, his healing likewise persists. His weakness is prolonged, but his healing is prolonged too. What is our concept of

healing after all? Healing to most of us is a matter of elimination. This is not so. Healing is not elimination at all, healing is having Someone there. It is not the absence of weakness but the presence of Power.

I recall when I first saw this how slowly the light dawned on me. It was because what my mind could grasp were only things and that what I saw around me were also things. I did not know that the Lord would be all things to me, nor did I understand that healing was not a thing. I only knew the Lord had given me a promise. I knew not how He was my healing. One day I was reading Paul's story in 2 Corinthians. I mused how easy it was for the Lord to give healing. For Him to take away that thorn from Paul was the simplest of matters. How strange that God did not do it. I therefore turned to prayer.

As I was praying I visualized a scene from some years back. In 1923 I was invited to preach in a certain city. I took a small boat that was sailing up the Ming River. I noticed that the boat was frequently dragging itself against the river bed, for the water was shallow and the bottom of the river was rugged. Sometimes the boatmen had to pull the boat by ropes up the river. In my prayer I suddenly recalled this incident. I said, "God, it is easy for You to remove these rocks. How nice it would be for the boat to sail with adequate water underneath it if You simply remove these rocks."

I read again 2 Corinthians 12, where I found this to be precisely Paul's prayer. The water was shallow and the rocks protruded sharply up from the river bed. Hence Paul was praying, "O God, would that You might remove these rocks that my boat may sail in the water." To which God answered, "I will not remove these rocks, but I will cause the water to rise. As the water rises, the boat can easily sail through." This is God's doing. What we ask for is healing as an object to obtain, but God wishes to be himself our healing. He will carry us through. That particular weakness of Paul still remained

with him; yet he was not trying to break through his weakness by his own strength. If he were to do so, he would be overshadowing himself with his own power. But it was the power of Christ that overshadowed him; it was God himself who was working. Here again is the basic distinction, that on the one side is God giving a thing, on the other side is God himself being that thing.

Countable Things Do Not Last

What do many people earnestly seek after? They are in pursuit of a thing. A large number of sisters came to talk with me. How they longed for patience! Yet I often mused how very thin must their patience actually run! Their thought is: If I could only be patient, if God would only give me a dose of patience to swallow, then I should be well. They seek for patience as though it were a dose of medicine. They may be able to be patient for three or five days, but this patience has a time limit. After being patient for a while, this “patience” shrivels up until one day it completely disappears. If it is but a thing it will be used up. And though it be obtained through prayer, it nevertheless will be exhausted. For the sake of the temporary need of His children and in order to accommodate their foolishness, God sometimes does hear their prayers and grant them their requests. He nonetheless will not hearken to them on all occasions, for such a condition ought never to be over-extended.

Due to the fact that in His word there is no thing but Christ—Christ being all and in all—God will not permit patience or humility or even love as a thing to be prolonged indefinitely on the earth. Eventually God will show us that Christ is patience, that Christ is humility, or that Christ is love. It is Christ, not an item, that He bestows. On the day when our relationship with the Lord is truly normalized, we will naturally see how all our problems are solved. It is really not a question of patience or whatever; it is a matter of Christ. As soon as our relationship with Christ is fully restored to that

which God has designed, our thousand and one problems will all be duly resolved. For the entire question is Christ, not a thing or things.

Must Know Christ

Before God all issues revolve around the one proposition of knowing Christ. What is meant by knowing Christ? Some people know Him as their love; other people know Him as their humility. Some know more of Christ while others know less of Him. In the measure of our knowing Christ as our many things is the measure of our knowing Him, for this alone is reckoned as our proper knowledge. Knowing Christ is not an abstract term applied only to objective truth; knowing Christ is both active and substantial. It is perceiving Him as our things: He is our this thing and He is our that thing.

Someone may be able to rise and testify how he knew nothing about cleanness—for his heart, head, thought and all else were unclean; but now, thank God, Christ has become his cleanness because God has made Him so. Immediately you realize that that is not a thing you possess, rather is it Christ. Since Christ dwells in you, He brings that thing to you. Not what belongs to you yourself but what He brings in with Him—this is Christianity.

In view of all that we have said, allow me to frankly state that unless the eyes of a child of God are opened by Him to see that Christ is his things, that person is of very little use to God. Because what he has are simply his works, that which he himself does. Even though he prays and receives from God, what is his is temporary, having little if any spiritual value before God.

Alas, how much grace which many people receive from God is but things. Some, though, receive grace with a Personality: their grace is the Son of God. Wait till one day you are able to say to God: "I thank and praise You, because the grace I have received is Christ.

My grace is a Person, having a Personality.” Oh, let me tell you that as soon as you see such difference you can immediately distinguish life from death. Many of the brethren can only distinguish between good and evil; they cannot differentiate life and death. The reason for this is simply that they fail to see that everything is in Christ. He is both the thing and the affair. In the spiritual realm there is neither thing nor affair but only Christ.

If God has truly opened your eyes, you instantly begin to recognize things when you meet them. This way sounds strange, yet it is factual. A person may seem to be patient, gentle, humble, faithful, loving, warm, forgiving and merciful, but to you whose eyes have been opened he is merely full of things. Just as everybody can distinguish a ring from a finger, a hat from a head, spectacles from eyes, and a dress from a body, so a person can differentiate things from Christ. To the uninitiated this may appear spectacular, but to those who perceive, it is quite simple. Whatever belongs to things is dead within and produces death without. If anyone has spiritual sensitivity he will sense death while doing it. The result of such external work can only be death and not life.

Someone may be very nice, yet his influence is limited to the realm of good and evil, having no spiritual effect. A brother who is good-natured, patient, enduring, sacrificial and loving may perhaps please you, but if these characteristics are only traits they will arouse in you a sense of death. You will not be able to embrace them; on the contrary, a resistance will well up within you. No one can calculate the power of this resistance of life. Sometimes people may say a word which sounds quite well but is nonetheless inappropriate, and it draws out from you a tremendous resistance. Say for instance in a prayer meeting. Why do you at times respond with an amen? Because you are touched by life. A brother as he is praying has touched your life, you therefore spontaneously say amen. But some other person's prayer, though it may sound earnest and appealing, produces a chilling effect within you. You long that he will cease

praying, for his prayer is no different from his personality. He has something, only that something has the touch of death. A thing produces death not only in the person himself but in others as well. There is absolutely no spiritual worth in it, for it is done by man.

Since this is the situation, we can do nothing before God but to wait on Him. More and more we shall see the evil of our own works. For if we are really led forward by God, we will surely discover that He hates our works as much as our sins. To those who sin, they must perish; to those who depend on their own works, they cannot be saved. God rejects our works just as He repudiates our sins. He accepts one thing only, and that is His Son Jesus Christ. It is Christ who becomes all things to us. Thank God, it is the Lord and not I. Not I trying to be humble, but He humbles himself. Not I struggling to love, but He loves instead. He does not give me power because He himself is my power.

Oh brothers and sisters, I do not know how best I should say this; I especially wish the newly saved to notice it. When you are delivered from spiritual things, you will touch the Lord. It is far better for you to perceive this as early as possible, otherwise it will become increasingly more difficult as time goes on. The larger the heap of things the harder you are able to see through. How must God beat you and toss you about before He is able to take away these items from you so that you may receive Christ. This I say God will surely do.

I am waiting for the day when all things—both things in the heavens and those upon the earth—shall be summed up in Christ. On that day the word of God will be fulfilled in that Christ is all. Let me challenge you. How can you expect Christ to be all if today you do not know Him as your all? Even now Christ will become all our things. God has given His own Son to us; God has given himself to us. So that Christ must be all to us today. There should not be any division between Christ and things. Nothing is spiritual, only Christ

is. He is all and in all. The reality of this must begin to evidence itself now in the church and with us. May we declare today that Christ is all and that He is in all. He is in my patience, He is in my gentleness, He is in my love. For He is all. How we look forward to that day when the Son of God is manifested to be all and in all. He indeed has the preeminence over all things, and then shall we know that the lessons we learn today are for use in that day. May God bless us.

A Prayer

Our Lord, we are before You asking for grace. Lord, we confess that our eyes are so blind that we cannot see clearly. Things we know, Christ we do not know. You, Lord, seem to be rather distant from us. *Things* look so real to us, while Christ himself is not that real. Lord, we truly ask You to cause us to see. May Christ become real to us. Let things pass away, let life fill us. Lord, we sincerely ask You to deliver us from the objects which can be counted that we may know the Lord who is a person. May the personal Lord be all our countable things. May everything in us be living and full of life so that people may see Christ when they see these things. Lord, cause us to understand how totally diverse are these two ways. How different is the way of the righteous from the way of the sinner; in like manner, how very much different is the way of a true Christian from that of a false one. There is need for much crushing. Crush us, Lord. Do not allow us to deceive ourselves: considering ourselves as having seen though we see nothing, as having touched the way when we are far from it, as being full of life whereas we are full of things. Lord, touch us. Establish Yourself firmly in us that from our inside to our outside it may be Christ and Christ himself.

Lord, bless these words that they may bear fruit in bringing people back to You abundantly. What man fails to speak, may You speak. May You cover human weakness and forgive man's folly. May You get something for Yourself in our midst. We need to be laid bare.

May this be the day of exposure to many people, that we may see ourselves as You see us. May a ray of light strike us which will uncover all falsehood and distinguish Yourself from all substitutes. Bless Your own word and glorify Your name. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.