

Christ – Our Relationship with Everything

"Without Me you can do nothing"

Apart from Christ we cannot do anything, and neither do we have a proper relationship with anything (John 15:5). According to John 14:6, it is through Christ that we come to the Father. We are not coming to the Father on our own, merely using the name of Christ in a formal way. Galatians 4:6 describes John 14:6 more precisely by showing that God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, "Abba, Father." We are coming with the Son Himself in our hearts crying, "Abba, Father." Our crying, "Abba, Father" is Christ in us crying, "Abba." He says, "Abba" in our "Abba" (cf. Gal. 4:6 and Rom. 8:15). In other words, we are actually participating in His relationship with the Father.

As my relationship with the Father, Christ is my righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). Thus, I am not shrinking back in coming to God; neither am I a

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condemned person. Far be it! There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). I am coming to the Father in Him, through Him, and with Him. If Christ can be condemned, then I can. But since He is outside the reach of condemnation, so am I. Hallelujah!

The illustration has been given of a soldier keeping himself in a tank and not lifting the lid to stick his head out. It is dangerous for him to raise his head out of the tank to look around. To do so is to risk becoming a target of the enemy. It is safer to keep the lid shut and remain in the tank. In the same way we need to stay in Christ, abide in Christ, and let Him be our relationship with God, not lifting ourselves up to look around at our condition. If you lift your head up and look at yourself with your subjective feelings and thoughts, you will become the target of the darts of Satan. Brothers and sisters, we just need to rest and remain in Christ. There is no need to defend our relationship with God when our relationship with God is Christ (Rom. 8:31-39). The diagram below will help us to see, both visually and scripturally, how our relationship with all things is Christ Himself.

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Christ is our relationship with all things – both positive and negative. As we have seen, on the positive side, Christ is our relationship with the Father. He is also our relationship with all the saints, the members of His Body. On the negative side, Christ is our relationship with sin, the self, the flesh, the world, condemnation, the devil, and the law. Praise the Lord! Thus, we must ask ourselves, how are we related to sin? How are we related to our flesh? How are we related to the world? Oftentimes, we have tried to live the Christian life with ourselves as the source. But we must see that we have no life in ourselves apart from Christ (John 6:53). Our life is wholly wrapped up with Him. Our true life has been hidden with Christ in God. "Christ who is our life" in Colossians 3:4 means that we died to sin in Him. We died to the flesh in Him. We died to the world in Him. We defeated the devil in Him. And we died to the law in Him. Praise the Lord!

Our relationship with all these realms is Christ. Even in our encounters with sins, we need to be a person who reacts exclusively with the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:17-19). Concerning

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sin, we need to interact with what happened on the cross. Christ died to sin, and in Him we reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to sin. We are alive to God in Him (Rom. 6:8-11). When we are oriented to these facts, our partaking of Christ and our participation in Him become so rich and full. He supplies to us the victory. The victory over sin and death is just Himself. We do not strive to win the victory. We receive and participate in His victory! Hallelujah!

Brothers and sisters, we are all on the same level, so we can all echo the familiar song, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me . . . O Lamb of God, I come, I come." This is exactly how we should relate to the Lord, always coming to Him where we are. If you are thinking that you have to do it, or that you have to repair yourself, or that you have to reach a point where you are stronger in yourself to be accepted by God, then you have it all wrong. There is nothing in ourselves that can stand before God (Rom. 7:18). In fact, if we would seek to clean ourselves up on our own, and come to Him with some merit in ourselves, His analysis would be that all our

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righteousnesses are nothing but filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). God only accepts one Person – His only begotten Son. Amen!

When Christ is revealed in me (Gal. 1:15), I have a new relationship with everything. I no longer come from the source of myself. I am no longer the savior of my life. Christ Himself is my Savior. I no longer interact with matters and things apart from Him, as though I am on my own. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 that as a man in Christ, I am in the realm of the new creation, where "all things are [out] of God." The new creation means Christ is the center and spring of my life, and because of this I now have a new relationship with all things.

Christ – Our Relationship with the Father

To understand our relationship with the Father, we must understand the relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. In Matthew 11:27, the Lord Jesus unveiled that relationship by saying, "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does

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anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." From this verse we see two crucial things about the relationship between the Father and the Son. First, the Father and Son's relationship is mutually exclusive. That means no one in this universe knows Their relationship except the Father and the Son. Second, the Father and Son's relationship can be revealed to us. That is, Their relationship can be known as the Son makes it known to whomever He wills. Thus, God has only one relationship – the relationship with His Son. The Father has no other relationship in this universe.

What is important to see in understanding our relationship with God is that we do not have a separate relationship apart from the Father and Son's own relationship. God is not establishing new relationships with others. He has established one relationship with His Son, and then He gives that relationship away as a gift. This is the meaning of the gift of eternal life in the New Testament. Eternal life is receiving the Son of God into us and participating in His relationship with the Father. John 17:3 says,

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"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Also, 1 John 5:20 says, "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

When we receive eternal life we receive the Father and Son's very own relationship. Hallelujah! Now Christ Himself is my relationship with the Father. You and I do not have a different relationship with God besides the one Christ has with the Father. This is why after the Lord revealed the one unique relationship in the universe between Himself and the Father in Matthew 11:27, He immediately said in verse 28, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This means there is no longer any need to labor and struggle in our souls, trying to establish our own relationship with God (Rom. 10:3-4). We only need to come to Jesus and learn from Him. When we do, we become one with Him and discover that our

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relationship with the Father is actually His relationship. We are merging with His relationship with the Father, and this brings rest to our souls (Matt. 11:28-30).

Based upon redemption, God can now give away His relationship with His Son. Galatians 4:4-6 says, 4 "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the [sonship]. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" To receive the sonship is to receive the rights, privileges, and relationships of the Son of God. Oh, brothers and sisters, our God took His relationship with His Son and put it right into our hearts! Amen! Now we do not have a separate fellowship with the Father. Indeed, we have been called into the one unique fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9). "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3b).

This relationship and fellowship means that we are not standing with our own righteousness,

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but with His alone (1 Cor. 1:30). Neither are we dependent upon our condition or status as the basis of our relationship with God. We are not trusting in anything related to ourselves (Phil. 3:7-9). We are nothing and have nothing. When we wake up in the morning we need not inspect "our relationship with God"; rather we say, "Lord Jesus, how are You doing today? How is Your relationship with the Father?" Never again do we need to doubt our relationship with God, since our relationship with God is Christ (Rom. 8:38-39).

The uniqueness of the Lord's relationship with the Father is emphasized in John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes ["is coming" ­p; present tense] to the Father except through Me." When He says, "no one," it means categorically no one (Rom. 3:10-12). No one is coming to the Father except through Him. When He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," He was, in effect, saying, "I am your constant relationship with the Father." How could we ever sink to puny, morbid introspection again? This kind of inner subjective activity is useless! It is wasted

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time and energy. My relationship with the Father is Jesus Christ my Lord. He doesn't change. Every morning I can wake up and open myself to God with a released spirit, knowing that my joy, my love, my relationship with the Father is absolutely wonderful. Hallelujah! Oh, what a Christ I have!

Christ – Our Relationship with Sin

To speak of Christ as our relationship with sin does not sound so positive, yet the New Testament reveals that Christ's relationship with sin has become my relationship. Christ is my relationship with sin. God dealt with sin in Christ. Then He put us in Christ, so that now our relationship with sin is to be found in Christ. Romans 6:8-11 clearly shows us how Christ is our relationship with sin: 8 "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise

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you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Verse 11 says that we are "alive to God in Christ Jesus." This is a most astounding fact. I can declare with boldness by the Word of God that I am alive and living to God in Christ Jesus. This truth renews my mind regarding how I am alive to God! This is truth that sets us free! On the positive side, we are alive to God in Christ Jesus; on the negative side, we are dead to sin. Since Christ died to sin once for all, His death to sin has now become my relationship to sin. There is no way to have a victorious relationship toward sin apart from Christ's relationship with it. Sin is a powerful force dwelling in our flesh (Rom. 7:14-24). To attempt in ourselves to overcome this indwelling sin is to end up in the same condition the apostle Paul experienced at the end of Romans chapter 7 – defeated and wretched.

In Christ's crucifixion, He died to sin once for all. Now in resurrection He lives to God in another realm. In the same way, we died to sin in His death (Rom. 6:6), and now, in Him we also live to God in another realm. Our history,

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our life, and our existence are all bound up with Him. Thus, our relationship to sin is the same as His relationship to sin; that is, it is in the realm of life. He is living to God and we also are living to God in Him.

To be dead to sin implies that we are living in another realm. Just like a dead person is dead in the physical realm but alive in the after-life (Luke 16:19-31), so we also are dead to the realm of sin because we are alive in the realm of the Spirit and life. According to Romans 8:2, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." One realm frees us from another realm. Thus, being dead to sin has nothing to do with our impotent efforts and struggles; rather it is a question of what realm we are in.

When we see Christ as all in all, He then becomes not only our relationship with all things, but He also becomes the new realm we live in. Indeed, the way we experience death to sin is not by trying to be dead to it in ourselves. It is by staying in the realm of resurrection. The realm of resurrection is the realm of the Spirit and life (1 Cor. 15:45b). In this realm we are

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automatically freed from sin. That is, the power of sin is broken in our lives by what one servant of the Lord has called "the expulsive power of a new affection." This new affection is in the realm of the Spirit. It is the love of God poured out in my heart by the Holy Spirit that enables me to put to death the practices of my body (Rom. 5:5; 8:13).

Dealing with sin is not to be achieved in a process of trying to overcome it. Rather, it is drawing from the life-power of Christ in the realm of resurrection. Instead of interacting with sin as though it were my responsibility to overcome it in myself, I interact with Christ – my relationship with sin. In that relationship, sin is a dead thing to me. Because I can exercise my spirit where I am alive to God in Christ, I come under the expulsive power of a new affection for God and the things of God (Rom. 8:5-6). It is that affection that immobilizes the force of sin in my life. In the realm of the spirit, indwelling sin forever remains a dead thing to me, because I died and my new me is now hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3-4).

In Romans 6:11 Paul says to reckon

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ourselves to be "dead indeed to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." The Greek term for "reckon" ­p; logizomai is a mathematical term and simply means $2 + 2 = 4$. This equation is reliable and can be counted on every time we use our calculator to do some addition. Paul wanted to convey that Christ as our relationship with sin is just as reliable. He meant that we could rely upon Christ as our relationship with sin just as we rely upon the facts of mathematics. For example, when you wake up in the morning and it's stormy weather outside and the electrical power has gone out, it does not change the fact that $2 + 2 = 4$. Whether it is good weather or bad weather – any kind of weather – two plus two will always equal four.

In the realm of the Spirit, to reckon means to trust and rely upon what exists in that realm. What exists there? Victory over sin in Christ Jesus! No wonder Paul broke forth in Romans 7:25 and declared, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (NASV). At that moment he saw Christ as his relationship with sin. Sin could no longer intimidate him. He was freed from the torment of sin, because he saw

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his new relationship with sin in the Person of Christ. Instead of being in the mode of being miserable and wretched, he started operating in the mode of thanksgiving. When we experience Christ in this way – as our relationship to sin – the church will become increasingly a life-giving expression of Him.

Christ – Our Relationship with the Flesh

In John 3:6 the Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." By using the Greek perfect tense (a present/permanent state) for the word "born," He conveyed two important principles: first, the realm of the flesh never changes; second, the realm of the spirit never changes. These two realms are separate from each other, are mutually exclusive, and, in fact, oppose each other (Gal. 5:17).

When we receive Jesus Christ into our lives, we need to realize that our flesh does not change at that time. Neither will it change in the future. It is our spirit that is born again. Our dead spirit is begotten of the divine Spirit and

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comes alive (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 8:10). Indeed, our newly-born, mingled spirit becomes the source from which we live as believers. It is into our regenerated spirit that Christ comes to dwell. From this place He Himself becomes our relationship with the flesh. Thus, our relationship with the flesh is Jesus Christ as He lives in our spirit and as we walk according to spirit (Rom. 8:3-4).

There are many aspects to the flesh – the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16), the will of the flesh (John 1:13), the mind of the flesh (Rom. 8:6-7), and the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19), to name a few. The flesh has feelings and reactions, as well as deeds; and many times we are subject to these things. Thus, we bear a close relationship with the flesh.

Concerning his own flesh, Paul had to admit, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells" (Rom. 7:18). Then, in Colossians he warns the believers that if they relate to the evil flesh with a religious flesh they will encounter certain defeat (Col. 2:18-23). How then can we be related to our flesh, if flesh cannot overcome flesh? The answer to that

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question is found in Galatians 5:24-25: 24 "And those who are [of Christ Jesus] have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." The phrase uttered by Paul, "those who are of Christ Jesus," tells us how we are to be related to the flesh. It is those who simply belong to Christ Jesus, who are one with Him in spirit, that have crucified the flesh. Are you one who is of Christ Jesus? This means you do not have a separate life from Him. You are wholly identified with Him. You do not have a separate relationship with the flesh in your flesh. You are of Christ Jesus, and as such, you own His relationship with the flesh. Hallelujah! His relationship with the flesh is not a long, drawn-out battle with it; rather it is a one-time crucifixion to it. The word "crucified" in Galatians 5:24 is in the aorist tense in Greek, indicating a blow was dealt to the flesh in the past that is decisive, complete, and final. That blow was dealt to the flesh on the cross of Calvary two thousand years ago.

How we are related to the flesh is wrapped up in the answer to one question – Are we of

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Christ Jesus? That is all we need to answer. We don't need to examine whether or not we have any potential. Neither do we need a record or string of victories that we can boast in. Nor do we need to look at our condition to see whether or not we feel like a crucified person. We just need to answer one question – Are we of Christ Jesus? If so, then we have crucified the flesh. Paul says it – If we are of Christ Jesus then we have crucified the flesh. This means that Christ is our relationship with the flesh.

In Galatians 5:24, the relationship with the flesh is established as a fact in Christ Jesus. Then in verse 25, the application and experience of this fact is revealed by Paul: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." To "live in the Spirit" in this verse is equivalent to being "of Christ Jesus" in the preceding verse. Thus, Christ in the realm of the Spirit is our relationship with the flesh. But for this fact to become our experience over and over again in our daily life, we need to walk in the Spirit.

The Greek word in Galatians 5:25 for "walk" is a specific military word, rather than the more general word for walk used in other

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places in the New Testament. It has the sense of "keeping in step with the Spirit." This could be likened to a group of soldiers marching down the street, keeping in step with the cadence of the drummer. Their steps are very deliberate and specific. It is the same when we walk in the spirit; Christ is in us, in our mingled spirit. He has already dealt a blow to the flesh. Now we must keep in step with Him whenever our flesh rises up to be fulfilled. This means we take a deliberate and specific step in spirit at the moment our flesh manifests itself. When we keep in step with the Spirit, the Lord Himself is our relationship with the reacting flesh. We just say, "Amen, Lord, I love You!" Or, call out His name, "Lord Jesus!" This is how we keep in step with the Spirit, and execute the crucifixion over our flesh.

The main point in dealing with the flesh is not to interact with it. We do not dare to handle it on our own. There is only One who is qualified to handle it, and He was incarnated to do so. He became flesh (John 1:14) and lived a victorious life in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). Now in resurrection He has become a life-giving Spirit

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in our spirit to supply to us His triumphant relationship with the flesh. Now all we need to do is keep in step with the Spirit. Pray a little bit, call a little bit, shout to God a little bit, sing a little bit. Just keep in step with the Spirit. For example, you come to a meeting with the feelings and mood of the flesh. Then during the meeting you start to walk in spirit. You are just keeping in step with the Spirit, and automatically in the realm of the Spirit you experience the crucifixion of the flesh. Hallelujah! This is our experience.

If, as an excuse, you say to me, "I can't overcome my flesh. I have already tried over and over again and failed." I will respond by saying, "That's right! Of course you can't!" If you and I have a relationship with the flesh based upon ourselves, we are through. Oh, brothers and sisters, let us come back to Christ – to see Him as our relationship with the flesh and then just keep in step with the Spirit. This is how the church is Christ. It is by a group of people enjoying Christ as their relationship with everything, including the flesh. When you, as a member of the Body, experience Christ as your

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relationship to sin and the flesh, and I experience Christ in my daily life in the same way, then when we all come together to meet – the church is Christ!

Christ – Our Relationship with the World

The church is also Christ is in its relationship with the world. When we as believers allow Christ to be our relationship with the world, we will find ourselves living a church life in the realm of the "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). The church life is described with similar terms in Colossians 3:10-11 as "the new man" where "Christ is all and in all." These phrases, "new creation," "new man," and "Christ is all and in all," depict the church life. To have a practical church life in this realm requires a decisive dealing with the world – both with the evil world and with the religious world. The world and the present evil age are always opposing God's perfect will to have the church life as a pure expression of Christ (Gal. 1:4; Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15-17).

The apostle Paul speaks concerning his

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relationship with the world in Galatians 6:14-15: 14 "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation." Paul lived in the realm of the new creation, and experienced the crucified Christ as his relationship with the world. The cross of Christ was the point of reference for Paul whereby the world was crucified to him and he to it. According to Paul in these two verses, "the world" is something opposite from the "new creation."

When our relationship to the world is Christ, we are crucified to it and it to us. That means we are released to live in the new creation – where we live in a different realm with different goals and different values. In this realm, the system of the world under Satan's dominion is nullified. Our priorities are not the same. We love Christ and the church. Our time and energy is for God's will and purpose, rather than being usurped by this age with its worldly preoccupations.

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Christ being our relationship with the world issues in the church life as the new creation. When I'm out of the world, I'm in the church. The church is the ekklesia – the called-out ones. That is the nature of the church – being assembled as the called-out ones. The fact that we could meet as the church, standing together in the cities where we live, means we are out of the world. We are out of the world, because Christ is out of the world (John 17:15-16). The cross is our once-and-for-all dealing with the world. We are not trying to deal with the world in ourselves. It has been dealt with in Him through His cross. Now we glory and boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, because by it the world has been crucified to us and we have been crucified to it. It is a dead thing to us and we are a dead thing to it. We no longer live in the realm of its values. Rather, we value the new creation where Christ is all and in all.

Christ – Our Relationship with Condemnation

Christ has also become our relationship with condemnation. Has it ever occurred to you what

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your relationship with condemnation is? Many times we live under a stream of condemning thoughts from the enemy in our mind. We relate to these thoughts by coping with them in some form or another. Sometimes we try beating them away in a fly-swatter fashion. Or, we attempt to replace them with new resolutions and promises to God that we won't fail again. Or, we just sink into depression. We live always feeling condemned.

God's answer to this spiritual disease is found in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." In other words, not being condemned has nothing to do with your past record or your present performance. Nor is it dependent on your ability to cope with your thoughts. It is strictly a matter of where you are. Where are you? Are you in yourself or are you in Christ Jesus? If you are in Christ Jesus, then you can shout "Hallelujah!" You can tell condemnation that you are now related to it in Christ. If Christ can be condemned, then you can be condemned. But since you are included and hidden in Him (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 3:3), all the arrows of

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condemnation have to come to Him. Of course, that is unthinkable.

When our religious flesh is alive, trying to be justified by the works of the law, we unwittingly set ourselves up for a condemnation situation. But if our flesh is terminated, and the law-keeping "I" is crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:19-20), then there is not even a possibility of receiving any condemnation. We don't even have a chance to be condemned anymore. We died with Christ, and it is "no longer I who live." Thus, Christ is now my relationship with condemnation.

Paul is so clear about being a person in Christ who cannot be condemned that he begins to boldly challenge everyone in the universe. It's as if he were saying, "Are you (whoever you may be) going to condemn me? Are you going to bring a charge against me? Come and listen to me!" Then in Romans 8:31 through verse 34, he declares, 31 "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

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33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Hallelujah!

Paul totally ignores the possibility of being chargeable, or of whether or not the condemnation is perhaps legitimate. He does not give any ground for anyone to say anything against him. He does not answer the charges with himself, his record, or even his victorious Christian life. He only answers with Christ Jesus. It is Christ who died! It is Christ who is risen! It is Christ who is at the right hand of God making intercession for us! It is Christ who is our relationship with condemnation!

Our problem is that we have been in a relationship with condemnation for such a long time that we live with our conscience deflated, and our spirit down. We can't enjoy God because we are flooded with condemning thoughts. At those points we have to boldly declare, "Condemnation, I don't have a relationship with you anymore. My relationship

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with you is now my Christ."

We all need to learn this lesson from an older brother in the Lord in Washington State. He is about 90 years old and he is ready to meet the Lord at any time. I heard him give the following testimony: "You know what I do when the devil comes and starts to condemn me? I say, 'JESUS! HE'S HERE AGAIN!' " Oh, brothers and sisters, that is what we need to declare when those condemning thoughts come streaming in – "JESUS, HE'S HERE AGAIN! The thoughts are here again!" We don't handle condemnation with ourselves. We handle it with Christ, because He is now our relationship with it.

Christ – Our Relationship with the Devil

One of the most crucial areas in which we need to know Christ is in our relationship with the devil. In Jude 9 we read, "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' " Michael's relationship

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with the devil in this verse is brief and to the point – "The Lord rebuke you!" That says it all. The Lord Himself is our relationship with the devil.

At every stage of the Lord's history, He defeated the devil. In His human life, in the wilderness and in His ministry He defeated him (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 11:20-23). In His death on the cross, Christ decisively destroyed the devil and triumphed over him (John 12:31-33; Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:14-15). In His resurrection, Christ broke the devil's power (1 Pet. 3:18-22; Rev. 1:18). In His ascension and enthronement, He subdued the devil (Eph. 1:19-22). In His building of the church, He crushed Satan under our feet so that he cannot prevail (Rom. 16:20; Matt. 16:18-19). In His indwelling in the believer, Christ is greater than the devil (1 John 4:4). In His battle to bring in the kingdom, all believers overcome the devil because of the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:9-11). In His millennial kingdom, the devil is bound in the abyss for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). In His eternal victory, the devil is cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). Hallelujah!

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At any point in our daily life we can resist the devil by simply resting in the Object of our faith – our victorious Christ (1 Pet. 5:8-9). By submitting to God with Christ our life, the devil has to flee (James 4:7). By being totally focused on Christ and remaining pure and simple toward Him, we keep ourselves preserved from the deceiving serpent so that he cannot touch us (2 Cor. 11:2-3; 1 John 5:18). What a victory! Christ is our relationship with the devil.

Christ – Our Relationship with the Law

God desires that the church be the enlargement of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). For this to happen God made Christ our wisdom and our relationship to everything (1 Cor. 1:30). Thus, the more we experience Christ as our relationship in all things, the more the church is Christ being fully expressed through His members.

This includes the believers' relationship with the law. Christ is also our relationship with the law. In Galatians 2:19-21, the apostle Paul shows how our relationship with the law is just

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Christ: 19 "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by [the] faith [of] the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." In verse 19 we see how God dealt with us in our relationship to the law – we died to the law in the death of Christ on the cross. When Christ died on the cross we also died (2 Cor. 5:14). Indeed, Paul makes it clear in Romans 7:3-4, that when the body of Christ was hanging on the cross, we not only died with Him but we died to the law with Him. The law demanded that the sinner die for his sin (Ezek. 18:4). Thus, in our co-crucifixion with Him, we legally and judicially died. We were all judged on the cross in His death. The law effectively put us to death in Him and dealt a final blow to our law-breaking flesh. This is the meaning of Paul's statement, "I through the law died to the law." Now that we have died to the law in the death of Christ, we no longer have a

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relationship with it in ourselves. Our relationship to the law is now Jesus Christ Himself. He is not only the end of the law for righteousness to us (Rom. 10:4), but He is the fulfiller of the righteous requirement of the law in us as we walk according to spirit (Matt. 5:17-18; Rom. 8:3-4). We are no longer occupied with living to an impersonal law and demand that has no life in it. We are living to God in a Person who is life and who gives life! Christ being my relationship with the law means that it is no longer the law-keeping "I" that lives, but Christ who lives in me. This means I am forever delivered from slavery, bondage, legality, impotence, and fear. I am now living to God in the Person of Christ. The way we live to God is not from ourselves or our efforts. We live to God in our relationship and fellowship with His Son. In the Son we have received the "sonship" (Gal. 4:4-5). The "sonship" in the New Testament means to have an existence continually living before God as an object of His love (Eph. 1:4-6). We are being constantly supplied with grace because we are in the One who is continually being loved – the Beloved

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One! This is "sonship."

I live to God in the very relationship that Christ has with the Father (Eph. 2:18). Even though I am still in the flesh and can feel its tendencies and weaknesses, my relationship with God is never disturbed. This is because of a constant infusion of faith that comes from being so flooded with the personal love of my Christ for me. Paul says it well in Galatians 2:20: "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by [the] faith [of] the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Thus, "the faith of the Son of God" was coming to Paul because of his love relationship with the Lord (Gal. 5:6). That is the way faith operates – it is simply by abiding in His love.

Despite the presence of the flesh and even the rumblings of the flesh, we are not under the law to interact with it or have any kind of relationship with it. The only thing we do now is keep ourselves in the love of God. By this we allow faith to keep infusing us to be completely occupied with Christ. It is in this way that the church is Christ – by saints being freed from the tyranny of the law, having only one relationship

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in their lives – Christ!

Christ – Our Relationship to Ourselves

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 -

One of the most wonderful things to discover is that once we have received Christ, He then becomes our relationship to ourselves. Paul makes this clear in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 14 "For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer [to] themselves, but [to] Him who died for them and rose again." In verse 14, when Paul says that "One died for all," according to our understanding, we probably would have continued the sentence by saying, "then all are forgiven." Of course, it is true in other passages of Scripture that when Christ died for all, He died to forgive all. However, in verse 14, Paul is stressing another aspect of Christ's death. The statement, "if One died for all, then all died" reveals a crucial fact about our relationship to ourselves. Furthermore, as we consider verse 15, Paul opens up what the issue

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should be of our having died in His death – "that those who live should live no longer [to] themselves, but [to] Him." In other words, a relationship to ourselves with ourselves has ceased – Christ is now our true relationship to ourselves. We do not live to ourselves any longer. We live to Him. The death of Christ is not only for our forgiveness; it is also for our termination. The terminating of the self is very positive, for it has one goal in view – the release of Christ living in us. When we no longer live to ourselves, we are no longer our point of reference in relation to our daily life and affairs. Our point of reference is no longer the self, but Christ. Thus, we begin learning how to live to Him. Who do we live to? Our orientation in our fallen nature is to live to ourselves – to our own reasoning mind, to our feelings, to our reactions, to our own analysis of ourselves. In the past "the self" has been our point of reference.

When the self is our point of reference, we really do not know ourselves as we should in God's light. In fact, according to the Scripture, apart from Him we are prone to being deceived about ourselves. The self cannot accurately

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know the self. So, no one really knows himself without God's light. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Who can know their own heart properly? We may think we are fine, when we are totally off. Or, we may think we are off, when we are fine. Brothers and sisters, we are unable to know our hearts. God says our hearts are desperately wicked, whether we agree with His diagnosis or not. It is God who asks the question, "Who can know the heart?"

In Jeremiah 17:10, the Lord answers His own question, "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." It is the Lord who knows and searches our hearts. Even the Lord is identified by a compound title in Greek – "the Heart-Knower" (Acts 1:24; 15:8). Thus, to know ourselves we must first come to know God. We may think we know ourselves by introspection, or by analyzing our own heart. We may imagine that we know ourselves rightly, but apart from being in fellowship with the Heart-Knower, we are

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prone to deception.

Actually, James says it in a good way: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." And immediately after that, he adds, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (4:8). Now, the religious way of understanding those verses is that first you cleanse your hands and try to purify your heart. You try to make it seem right, according to your thought. Then you draw near to God – as though you are the savior and the one who cleans yourself up, as though you are the one qualified to know the duplicity in your heart and to know when your heart is divided, as though you can do the work yourself. You think that after you've done what you could, then you can draw near to God. But James doesn't say it that way. He says to come as you are and draw near to God. Come just the way you are, without one plea, but that His blood was shed for you. Blood has been shed. You can come the way you are, and God will draw near to you. And then you get in the light. "In Your light, we see light" (Psa. 36:9). In God's light your hands are dirty. "O God, look at the filth on me." And

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yet, when you're looking at your hands, you're not looking at them with yourself as the point of reference. You're looking at yourself from His light, and in His light, the blood is cleansing. And you can weep and you can repent and you can shed tears; and all the time you're weeping and repenting and shedding tears, it's not at all ascetic or religious. You are actually participating in the grace of God.

Repentance is a gift (Acts 11:17-18). You don't work up repentance. Repentance is given to us as a gift (Ezek. 36:25-31). The fact that I could weep and repent and confess – that is a gift of God. Hallelujah! It's not of us. The whole thing is Him, from beginning to end. So we see that first, you draw near to God and He'll draw near to you, and then you see your dirty hands and you see your heart – your motivation and how you manipulate people. You see the duplicity in your heart. You see how thoroughly corrupt you are. And all the time you see that, you say, "Lord, I still love You." And when you're saying that, He's just diffusing His life into your heart. He's going to change you. "I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh"

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(Ezek. 36:26). It's as though He's saying, "You can't do it. I'll take it away. I'll give you a new heart. I'll give you a heart of flesh. And you will walk in My statutes. You will do it, because I'm going to do it in you."

In one of our home meetings, there was a new sister among us. She was worn out as a believer, and was ready to give up the Christian life. She had no where else to go. She sat in that meeting, just forlorn, disappointed. Raised in a Christian home, she'd had all the Christian upbringing, but didn't know which way to turn. I said to her, I'm going to show you something. I opened to Ezekiel 36. She sat there, her face sad because she realized the condition of her heart, but had no way to handle it. I said, Look at what it says here, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you." Her tears were just starting to come down. I said, Look – "I will take away the stony heart." – He's going to do it! She had never seen it before, that He would actually take away the stony heart. She began to weep for joy to see that it was God's work – God was going to do it.

"Draw near to God." You draw near, not

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after you adjust yourself, but before you even try. Because the blood has been shed, we can enter into God – the real Savior. He's the real Repairer. He's the real Healer. He's the One who cleans up our heart. He's the real Cleaner-upper. He's the real Restorer. He does it, and He does it while we're in contact with Him.

Being oriented to Christ in your experience means you're in contact with Him – no longer living to yourself but to Him. My point of reference is no longer me. My point of reference is Christ. For example, if I'm broken down, and I need some repair, then I need to go to the Repairman. Jesus is my Repairman. I don't know how to fix anything. I'm just simple to come to Jesus. This is what I appreciate about my wife. She has her weaknesses, but amazingly, even in her frailty, weaknesses, and feelings of failure, she still has that boldness to just keep coming to God. Sometimes I wondered how she could be testifying in a meeting so boldly, when she's feeling so weak. But, you know, this is the right way – "Just as I am, without one plea . . . Fightings within and fears without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

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Amen. Just like that. And He does the work in us.

- Romans 14:7-8 -

God wants us to keep coming forward and enjoy this grace that's ours. So, our point of reference is not ourselves, it's Him. Romans 14:7-8 tells us, "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." Then verse 9 continues, "For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living." It says, "that He might be Lord" – the Boss – "both of the dead and the living." So, live to the Boss. Live to the Lord. He died and rose again, not merely to become a ticket in our pocket for us to go to heaven when we die. He died and rose again to be Lord. This means we live now to Christ. He's our point of reference. We no longer live to ourself. We never refer back to ourself. Our whole source has changed, from ourself to Him. He's bringing us back to

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what He intended with the tree of life in the garden of Eden – that He would be our source.

Our relationship with ourself is Christ. This kind of understanding will come progressively in our experience. As our mind is renewed by the Spirit and by the Word, a consciousness of life will begin to invade every area of our living. We will start linking this word with our experiences. For example, you have a love of money in your heart, and you're not allowing the Lord to be the Lord with your finances. You're struggling over this matter. Then you begin to make the link with the Word – Christ is your point of reference. So now, you begin to touch Him, "Lord, Amen. You're my relationship with money. Jesus, thank You, You're the giving One in me. You're the life in me." You begin to drink and to eat Him in this way, and you begin to experience Him. You'll discover that your greedy, closed hands will begin opening up and you'll start giving, even hilariously, because Christ becomes your life.

This consciousness of Christ being our point of reference will continue to spread in our daily life. For example, you will find it in your

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speaking. You say something, but in your saying it, you feel like you put on a suit of clothes that doesn't fit, that doesn't feel right. As you're criticizing and gossiping, you're going to feel like, "O Lord, this language doesn't fit. Amen, Lord, You're my talk. You're my speaking. I used to speak so freely. But Lord, Amen." By contacting Him and experiencing Him in this way, you begin to feel the restraint in your words. Christ is becoming your talking (2 Cor. 13:3).

Little by little, the Holy Spirit will begin to make Christ real in your speaking. You may fail, but you experience Christ in your failure. You touch the living One, because your point of reference has changed. You can no longer rearrange your thoughts, thinking "I shouldn't talk that way anymore." Nor can you replace bad thoughts with good thoughts. That doesn't work! You have to interact with God. You have to touch the Spirit. And when you touch the Spirit, you draw from Him and He changes you. Then, you come to the meeting and you just make the meeting Christ – because you've handled Him. You've handled Christ as your

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portion in your speaking. Amen!

Christ – Our Relationship to One Another

When Christ is our relationship to ourselves, and we know ourselves in God's light, the result of this knowing is that Christ becomes our relationship to one another. The apostle Paul follows this sequence in 2 Corinthians 5:14-17, 14 "For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer [to] themselves, but [to] Him who died for them and rose again. 16 Therefore, from now on, we [know] no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." In verses 14 and 15 of this passage, Paul stresses that we no longer live to ourselves, based upon the fact that we all died in Christ. Then in verse 16 Paul goes directly into our relationship with one another. In other

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words, when we live to Christ rather than to ourselves, we know each other and are related to each other, not according to the flesh, in the realm of the old creation, but in the spirit, in the realm of the new creation.

The deep significance of 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 that Paul opens up is a new kind of knowing of Christ in contrast to his old knowing of Christ. What is this new kind of knowing of Christ? The obvious answer is in verse 17, where Christ is presented in an enlarged way by Paul. He no longer considers Christ merely alone by Himself. He says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. . ." Christ here is not just an individual man, but a corporate man where other persons are "in Him." Thus, the new knowing of Christ is knowing Him as the church (Eph. 5:29-30). It is the knowing of Him according to 1 Corinthians 12:12, where both the one body and the many members form one whole Christ! It is also the same knowing of Him found in Paul's prayer for the believers in Ephesians 1:17-23. Here, the full knowledge of God is to know Christ as Head of His Body, the church, which is described as being "the

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fullness of [the One] who fills all in all."

It is the church as Christ that is the new kind of knowing of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:16. The church described as "the new man" in Colossians 3:10-11 is also the new kind of knowing of Christ. The church as the new man of the new creation is the realm where Christ is all and in all. It is also the realm where old things have passed away and all things have become new! In this realm we know each other as members of Christ. We no longer regard or know each other according to the differences and distinctions of the old creation (Gal. 3:27-28).

According to the context of 2 Corinthians chapter 5, to say, "old things have passed away" and "all things have become new" means that old relationships have passed away and all things in our relationships with each other have become new. We all have together been newly created in Christ as one new man, and have all been reconciled to God in one body by the cross (Eph. 2:15-16). Christ as our relationship with each other is what the church is. In other words, the church is just Christ between us. If Christ is

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not our mutual fellowship, then the reality of the church is lost. So, brothers and sisters, to know the church is to know Christ as our relationship with each other. It is not a matter of knowing each other in a natural way according to race or background. Neither is it formally joining a church to become a member. No. We are joined to the Lord in one Body, and His relationship with all His members becomes our relationship with every member. So we freely receive one another the way Christ received us (Rom. 15:7). This is what the church is. Praise the Lord!

The depths and intimacy of Christ as our relationship with one another comes out in Paul's relationship with the Philippians. In Philippians 1:8 we read, "For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the [inward parts] of Jesus Christ." Here Paul so identifies his feelings with the Lord's that he is not merely saying, "I am burdened for you," or "I am thinking of you." The Lord Himself with His inward parts became the relationship with the Philippians. Paul was a man who embodied the Lord's own feelings and intimate care for the saints. This demonstrates to what extent Christ

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becomes our relationship with one another. My relationship with you and your relationship with me is Christ. How precious this is. The more there is an increase of Christ in us, the more there will be an increase of Christ in our relationships. Amen.

— *Bill Freeman*