

The Life Christ Lives in Us

“Receiving Christ and through Him united to God, there comes to us the stupendous blessing expressed in these words ‘that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Him may be in them.’ We become the objects of the very same love which the Father has for His Son. We are recognized as part of Him even as the bride is taken into her husband’s family and loved even as her husband. This is, indeed, the mystery of mysteries: that we are permitted to share the intimate and exclusive affection of the eternal Father toward His only begotten Son. He loves us now, not for ourselves, nor in proportion to our personal claims upon His affection, but precisely as He loves Jesus Christ, with infinite complacency and unlimited measure.”

— A. B. Simpson

The Lord’s life in the Gospels and in us

By observing the Lord’s life on the earth, we can become more familiar with the Lord’s life within us. The one unique life that is described in the four Gospels is *the very same life* that is now living in us. Thus, by studying the Lord’s life in the Gospels, we are not merely considering something objective or outside of us, but something that is also subjective in our spirit. His life lived out

in the Gospels is what is now being reproduced in us by His indwelling.

As Christians we can have the assurance that the same Christ who was once outside of us is the Christ who is now inside of us. Furthermore, the way Christ lived on the earth is precisely the same way He is living in us. We must see that the kind of life He lived in the flesh is not something different from the life He now lives in us. This is a basic biblical principle — learning how to apply the Lord’s life in the flesh to our own experience of Him in the spirit.

The apostle Paul spoke according to this principle in Ephesians 4:20-21 when he said to the believers, ²⁰ “But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus.” To “learn Christ” is to learn Him by His example in the four Gospels; and “the truth in Jesus” means that Jesus lived a life of truth, or reality, by always doing things *in* the Father, *with* the Father, and *for* the Father. This was the truth in Jesus demonstrated and recorded in the Gospels.

Now as believers having Christ as our life and being taught in the realm of our spirit union with Him (1 Cor. 6:17), we come to learn that the *same* relationship He had with the Father in the flesh is the same kind of experience being repeated in us in the spirit. We “have heard Him and have been taught in

IN THIS ISSUE:

- The Life Christ Lives in Us
— Pages 1-4
- NEW Book Announcement
— Insert

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Him.” Thus, to adequately learn the indwelling Christ in our experience, we need two things: we need to study the Lord’s example in the Gospels and to watch how that same life is being worked out in our union with Him in the details of our daily life.

Another passage that reveals this same principle is Philippians chapter 2. In verse 5 Paul says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Following this statement Paul continues to describe the Lord’s attitude of humility in His incarnation and human living, setting it forth as an example of what believers are to expect God to work in them. In other words, the mind and disposition that was “in Christ Jesus” in the four Gospels is the same mind and disposition that is being wrought into us as a result of the indwelling Christ.

By applying this principle to our spending time with the Lord, we observe one of the most striking features of the Lord’s life recorded in the Gospels — *how He spent time with the Father*. The following passages reveal this: Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1; 22:39, 41; and Matthew 14:22-23. In the midst of His ministry, He was often slipping away to spend time alone with the Father to pray. This aspect of the Lord’s earthly life teaches us that the same Christ now living within us still needs time for fellowship and prayer with the Father. If we follow the Lord in His prayer life in the Gospels, we discover many helpful points regarding how the Lord spent time with the Father. What was true of Him then is still true of Him now as He continues to live His life in us. Thus, we can learn Christ in us and how to spend time with Him by considering how He spent time with the Father.

The Lord’s love relationship with the Father

In considering the Lord’s prayer life, the first question we must look into is, what motivated Him to spend so much time with the Father? The answer is simply — love. Indeed, the outstanding feature that characterized the Lord’s earthly life was His love relationship with the Father. This can be seen in John 1:18: “No one has seen God at any time; the

only begotten Son, who is *in* the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” The preposition “in” in this verse is better translated “into” (Gk. εἰς). It should read, “the only begotten Son, who is *into* the bosom of the Father.” There is a difference between “in” and “into.” “In” implies a stationary position, whereas “into” implies motion and movement into something. Thus, the preposition “into” in John 1:18 describes the motion and movement within the intimate love relationship the Son had with the Father.

Frederick L. Godet, in his classic commentary on the Gospel of John, makes the following comment on this love relationship: “This present participle *who is* (ὁ ὄν) refers to the permanent relation of the Son to the Father through all the stages of His divine, human, and divine-human existence. He ever presses anew with an equal intimacy into the bosom of the Father, who reveals Himself to Him in a manner suitable to His position and His work at every moment. The form εἰς κόλπον [*into* the bosom], instead of ἐν κόλπῳ [*in* the bosom] (the preposition of motion, instead of that of rest), expresses precisely this active and living relation. The bosom of the Father is not a place, but a life; one *is there* only in virtue of a continual moral act.” Thus, to say the Lord was “into the bosom of the Father” is a very descriptive and intimate way of revealing the Lord’s love relationship with the Father.

The secret to the Lord’s life of expressing the Father, of His being so one with the Father, and of His always pleasing the Father was His love-life *into* the bosom of the Father. The Lord’s human life consisted of His habit of continually spending time pressing anew into the bosom of the Father and allowing the Father’s love to saturate Him. The Lord said in John 15:9-10,⁹ “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” This was the key to the Lord’s daily life. He knew how to spend time with the Father, abiding in His love.

Now the Lord’s life indwelling us is exactly the same as it was in the Gospels. It is still a love-life

pressing ever anew into the bosom of the Father. That is why the Lord commands all His believers to abide in His love. This is our greatest need in spending time with the Lord — just to abide in His love. However, with so many of us, the problem is that we abide in our present condition, we abide in our failures, we abide in our past record, we abide in our concepts, and we abide in our anxieties about the future. In other words, we abide in everything but His love. We know all about ourselves and can dissect our problems accurately, but we know very little about spending time with the Lord, basking in the sunshine of His love.

Let me ask, how is your love relationship with the Lord? Is He sweet? (S. of S. 5:16). Is He intimate? (S. of S. 1:2-4). Do you enjoy Him as the One who loves you and shed His blood for you? (Rev. 1:5). If you do not enjoy the Lord in this way, then you need to reevaluate your whole Christian life. Are you trying to live an overcoming life in your own strength? Have you fallen into the Galatian error of beginning by the Spirit but then endeavoring to be perfected by the flesh? (Gal. 3:3). Are you struggling to improve your behavior? Are you even serving and working for the Lord but still lacking a sweet and intimate love relationship with Him? Perhaps your entire Christian life is one defeat after another simply because you have neglected to spend time fellowshiping with Him and abiding in His love.

Cultivating a love relationship with the Lord

We must be clear concerning this matter. It takes time to cultivate a love relationship with the Lord. This was demonstrated by the Lord's own earthly life. He repeatedly spent time with the Father, enjoying the Father's love (Luke 5:16). In Mark 14:36 we find the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, where it was His habit to go and be with the Father (Luke 22:39). Here He was once again pressing anew into the bosom of the Father while facing the critical hour of crucifixion. Mark records in verse 36 that He was saying repeatedly, "Abba, Father." This means that even when He became obedient unto death, the death

of the cross, He was doing it by enjoying the Father's love. To say "Abba" is to call upon the Father in the most sweet and intimate way.

Now we must see that this same "Abba, Father" love-life that the Lord demonstrated in the garden has been sent into our hearts in Galatians 4:6. Here Paul declares, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" What a joy! What a hope! The very prayer life of God's Son is in our hearts. The intimate love-life between the Father and the Son has been put into us. We have it! It is not a matter of trying to find it or longing to possess it. We already have the Triune God's love-life within us. And just by virtue of our being a born-again Christian, we are entitled to merge in our hearts with the love flowing between the Father and the Son in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).

Now the Lord's love-life with the Father simply needs to be cultivated and released in us. That life is in us twenty-four hours a day — the same life that cried "Abba, Father," the same life that withdrew so many times into the wilderness to pray, the same life that wanted to be with the Father alone — that life is in us. And this life in us needs time. The same life that took time to pray in the Gospels still needs time to pray in us. The Spirit of His Son is located within our hearts, waiting for us to join in and cry "Abba, Father" (cf. Gal. 4:6 and Rom. 8:15-16). What an indescribable enjoyment — that we could merge with the Son's life which is ever pressing anew with equal intimacy into the bosom of the Father.

Spending time with the Lord in this way will supply us, deliver us, save us, and transform us. We do not need human effort, religion, or outward improvement of behavior. We do not need to adjust ourselves with our natural energy. We just need time to be with the Lord to allow ourselves to abide in His love.

The Lord further described our participation in this love-life of the Triune God in John 17:26 by saying to the Father, "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." This means exactly what it says: the very same love

that Jesus enjoyed from the Father is in us, not imitated by us or worked up by us. We experience the Triune God's love-life dwelling in us by allowing this love-life to pass through our being from our spirit (Rom. 8:15) into our heart (Gal. 4:6). In light of this, who would be so foolish as to neglect spending time with the Lord enjoying this flow of liquid love!

Who can fathom the intensity of the Father's love and delight in His beloved Son? Step out of yourself for a moment. Do not consider your condition. Stop your struggle for victory. Cease from all your preoccupations. Just stop and consider one thing — the Father's love to the Son! The Father declared from the heavens at Jesus' baptism, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). The Son is the Father's delight! Not you, not me, not our condition, but the Son! The flow of the Father's love is all channeled to the Son.

Now listen to John 17:26 once more: "That the love with which You loved Me MAY BE IN THEM, AND I IN THEM." What you and I need is not to find out how to solve our problems, but rather to place ourselves before the Lord and to simply give Him some time for His love-life to pass through us. The flow of the divine love conveyed to us by the Spirit (John 7:37-39) not only solves our problems, but brings us everything we need. The love-life of the Triune God Himself is our portion and enjoyment. We just need to spend time cultivating it.

From eternity past to eternity future God's love is over us and with us. In fact, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. No principalities, powers, death, life — whatever realm — nothing can separate us. We are more than conquerors, not through our condition, not through our potential, but through Him who loved us. However, if we do not spend time with the Lord and put ourselves aside, we may be cheated from the daily enjoyment of this mighty flowing love.

Paul lived in the enjoyment of this love, and that love was the realm whereby Christ lived in him. In Galatians 2:20 he said, "I have been crucified with Christ." That means I am put out of the way, I am

terminated. "It is no longer I." I have been put aside. Now it is Christ who lives in me. Then Paul adds, "and the life which I now live in the flesh," that is, in the environment of my flesh — the strivings of my flesh, the anxieties of my flesh, the depression of my flesh, all the things of my flesh — the life I now live in this environment, I will tell you how I live: "I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Paul does not say, "loved us," but "loved me." That was how personal and intimate the Lord's love was to Paul, and this was what motivated him to enjoy this living Person.

So in spending time with the Lord to cultivate a love relationship with Him, we must put ourselves aside to hear God's voice speaking about His Son: "In Him I am well pleased." Just forget about yourself. Let the Lord speak that word to you, "I delight in Him." And then tell Him, "Lord, You are the Father's delight. I treasure this time that I could spend in prayer enjoying You, the One who is the Father's delight." It is in this loving interchange in our spirit between us and the Lord, with the eyes of our heart gazing upon Him, that we are spontaneously being transformed.*

— Bill Freeman

* This article is taken from chapter 4 of the newly published and expanded book, *Spending Time with the Lord* by Bill Freeman. This book of 224 pages may be ordered for \$10.95, plus \$2.00 shipping, from **Ministry Publications**, P. O. Box 12277, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 • Phone: (480) 948-4050 • Fax: (480) 922-1338.

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