

CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY.

"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I stand in doubt of you." – Gal. 4:19,20.

The wealth of God's wonderful favor to the church of Christ is briefly comprehended in that one expression of the Apostle Paul, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27.) Christ in you, dear ones, is the only Scriptural foundation for that good hope of the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If Christ be not formed in you, then indeed is your hope vain, no matter how much truth or how many advantages you may possess. The object of giving the truth is not to satisfy mere idle curiosity, but to sanctify us wholly; and if it does not accomplish this result, the knowledge of it is only the stronger condemnation against us.

In writing to the congregation of believers at Colosse who had received the truth from Paul with gladness and all readiness of mind, the Apostle, as the above text indicates, was obliged to change his tone or manner of expression toward them, because their vacillating course since receiving the truth proved to him that the spirit of Christ, the spirit of the truth, was not yet formed in them. And therefore he here represents his work among and for them as that of a mother in the first stages of gestation, travailing in painful and laborious effort until the new being is formed. When the "new creature" is once definitely formed, the process of development, as illustrated in the development of the natural fetus, is less laborious and distressing; yet there is labor and anxiety all the way to those whose care over the church, like Paul's, is akin to that of motherhood, until the new creature is actually born at the resurrection. After the new creature is formed, if there be no mishap, no miscarriage, there will in due time be the birth of a glorious being, of the divine nature, in the likeness

of our glorious Head; and great will be the joy then of all such as have taken the motherly interest in the formation and development of the Christian character of these called and faithful and chosen.

There comes a time during the period of natural gestation, shortly after the formation of the new creature, when life begins to manifest itself in activity. This manifestation of activity is called the quickening. If this quickening never takes place, the sure indication is that whatever of dormant life there may have been is becoming or has already become extinct, and the birth of the new living creature will therefore never take place unless the dying embryo can in some way be resuscitated and brought to the quickening stage.

This is precisely what Paul was endeavoring with much carefulness and painstaking to do for the church at Colosse. They had received the truth with gladness, and Paul was for a time greatly beloved among them as a messenger of the truth. But very soon after they lost confidence in the truth and were speedily **[R1274 : page 7]** drifting into error – the error of trusting to the law Covenant of God for salvation instead of humbly depending on Christ alone, who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" – that trusteth in him.

The cause of this instability and sudden turning away from the truth on the part of the Colossian church is clearly intimated in the above text. It was because Christ was not formed in them. Although they had been begotten by the word of truth, the new germ of spiritual being had not yet progressed even to the definite formation of Christian character which manifests its existence and life in activity; they had not reached the quickening stage, although it was high time that such indications of life should appear in them. Therefore said the Apostle, "I desire to be present with you now, and to change my tone; for I stand in doubt of

you." Ah! instead of the joyful tone, proclaiming the good tidings of the grace of God to them, as formerly, it must now be the tone of reproof, of warning and of exhortation.

But let us inquire more particularly what it is to have Christ formed in us. It is not merely to have a knowledge of Christ and of the divine plan which God is working out through him; it is not merely to have an admiration for his character and glory, or a desire to share his glory in the day of his manifestation; it is not merely to talk loudly of the truth, nor to make long prayers, nor to wear solemn faces and make loud professions of holiness. This is the negative answer to the question, but what is the affirmative? We answer, It is to have a Christ-like character distinctly formed in us as a result of the begetting power of the truth and of the exceeding great and precious promises, inspiring in us *love* to God and to all his creatures; *faith* in his sure Word of promise and in his ability and willingness to accomplish all his purposes; *obedience*, or full consecration to the will of God at any cost to self, and a fixed determination ever to abide by his expressed will; and *zeal*, which makes manifest this disposition of heart in activity for the accomplishment of the purposes of God, in so far as the Scriptures inform us that human agency can affect them. These fundamental principles of Christian character – love, faith, obedience and zeal – must be *established* before the new creature can be said to exist at all. And if they are thus established, God has provided the conditions necessary to their gradual growth and development until, in due time, the new creature is born into the full perfection and glory of the divine nature.

If these principles of the Christian character are not definitely formed, or fixed in us, we will always be vacillating in our faith and obedience, and lacking in love and devotedness to God; and we can therefore have no good hope of the reward of the faithful. If we have merely a little love for God which

appreciates but slightly his blessings and promises, and a little faith which indolently says – This good news seems to be true, but I do not exactly know; many smart men read the Bible quite differently and arrive at opposite conclusions; it is difficult to discover which is right and I shall not trouble myself trying to find out, so I have a general charity for all and am *no bigot*; – and if we are willing to obey God only so far as it suits our convenience, to trust him as far as we can trace him, and to advance his truth only so far as our indolence will permit us to discover it, and as our temporal interests may be served by it – if such be our condition of heart, then *the Christ character is not formed in us*. And though we may have been begotten by the exceeding great and precious promises to a good hope of life in Christ, the germ of the new life is in a dying condition and will never come to the birth unless it can be resuscitated and developed to the actual formation of the Christ character, which always manifests itself in loving zeal for the Lord's cause – for the advancement of his truth and the upbuilding of his consecrated ones.

How important, then, that each of those who hope to have a share with Christ in his kingdom sees to it that his hope is founded upon the fact that Christ is now actually formed in him, and that as evidence of this he has manifestly reached the quickening stage in the process of development, when love, faith and obedience are all full of activity and zealous in seeking and improving every opportunity for the service of God. If we hear the truth and merely say that we consecrate ourselves to God, and then go on living just like the rest of the world, spending all or nearly all of our time and our means merely for our stomachs, our backs and the temporal interests of our families and the business pursuits of the present life, what evidence have we that we are quickened, that the Christ character is formed in us, or that the hope of glory is ours? Many seem to make this mistake, and the evidences of the shipwrecked faith of many such lie all about us; but, thank God!

the evidence of faithfulness – of the actual formation and development of Christian character – is also apparent in the quickened zeal of many. And it is a noteworthy fact that those whose mortal bodies are thus quickened in the service of the truth have the clearest perception and discernment of truth, and the evil one is unable to touch them with the shafts of error.

Let all who aspire to the inheritance of the saints make sure that they have the Christ character *formed* in them, that the principles so notable in Christ's character are established in them. Let us each see that we do not hinder the development of this character by giving our time, our vitality, our means, etc., to the pursuit of the things of this world. Have you *love*? Is it manifested in fervent zeal for the honor of God, the spread of his truth and the blessing of his children? Are you seeking and finding opportunities for thus showing the Lord how much you love? Have you *faith*? Is it unmistakably manifested, not merely in profession, but in bold and definite acts of faith? If a million dollars were promised to any man who would walk from Pittsburgh to Buffalo, and a dozen men professed faith in the promise, and yet only one actually started out and walked, the natural and correct inference would be that the other eleven did not have the faith. If they had the faith in such a promise it would rouse them to activity. And just so, any man who appreciates fully and believes the exceeding great and precious promises of God to the church, will make haste and run for them; and he will closely observe the directions, too, that he may not run in vain.

And if Christ be formed in him, those established principles of Christian character will hold him firm and steady in the midst of temptations and error, and he will not be easily moved either from the practice of righteousness or from sound Scriptural doctrine. He will demand a "Thus saith the Lord" for every doctrine, and on that sure word he will dare depend. And the language of his heart as expressed in his daily life will be, "My

heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people." "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart." "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." – Psa. 57:7,9; 119:111; Jer. 15:16.

While such must be the personal condition of every heir of the Kingdom, the special work of every such one should be to help those begotten by the Word of truth to arrive at this condition of *fixed* and *quicken*ed Christian character. Be not satisfied, beloved fellow laborers, when those within the range of your influence are merely begotten by the Word of truth, but, by instruction, example and assistance, labor diligently to have Christ formed in them, the hope of glory; and then, so far as possible, minister also to their further development, that they may eventually be born in the glorious, divine nature.
