

"CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY."

– COLOSSIANS 1:27. –

LANGUAGE is but a medium for the communication of thought, and words are but symbols of ideas. When words are so framed in sentences as to express an impossibility or an absurdity, when considered literally, but do forcibly illustrate a known truth when symbolically interpreted, we instinctively recognize the figure, and are instructed by it. In this way many of the deep things of God – the spiritual things – are expressed to us, since they are often forcibly illustrated by things familiar to us on the natural plane. Thus, for instance, the resurrection, both natural and spiritual, finds an illustration in the processes of vegetation (1 Cor. 15:35-38); and the processes of the beginning, development and final perfecting of the spiritual sons of God find a remarkable illustration in the begetting, quickening and birth of the natural man. (James 1:18; Eph. 2:1; John 3:3.) But if, when we read these symbols or illustrations of spiritual things, we pervert and dishonor our God-given reason by accepting palpable absurdities as their interpretation, we deceive ourselves, and in so doing are not blameless. In parables and dark, symbolic sayings our Lord opened his mouth and taught his disciples, expecting them to use their common sense in either interpreting them themselves, or in judging of the correctness of any interpretation offered by others as they should become meat in due season. And when on one occasion, instead of using their brains to draw from it the implied lesson, the disciples asked for the interpretation [R3250 : page 375] of a parable, Jesus suggestively and reprovingly replied, "How then will ye know all parables?" (Mark 4:13.) He would have us think, consider and put our God-given mental faculties to their legitimate use.

Bearing in mind these wholesome reflections, together with the fact that the Scriptures abound in these symbolic expressions of truth, let us consider the Apostle's meaning when he speaks of "Christ in

you, the hope of glory." He uses the same figure again in his letter to the Galatians (Gal. 4:19), saying, "My children, whom I am bearing again, till Christ be formed in you," etc. Here the Apostle is likening his care and labor and endurance for those who had been begotten by the Truth to the new nature, to the physical endurance of a mother in nourishing and sustaining the germ of human life until the new human creature is formed and able to appropriate for itself the life-sustaining elements of nature, independent of her life. So the Apostle sought to nourish and sustain those germs of spiritual being with his own spiritual life until, apart from his personal work and influence, they would be able to appropriate for themselves the God-given elements of spiritual life contained in the Word of Truth; – until the Christ-character should be definitely formed in them.

In no other reasonable sense could the Apostle bear those Galatian Christians; and in no other reasonable sense could Christ be formed in them, or in us. The thought is that every true child of God must have a definite individual Christian character which is not dependent for its existence upon the spiritual life of any other Christian. He must from the Word of Truth, proclaimed and exemplified by other Christians, draw those principles of life, etc., which give him an established character, a spiritual individuality of his own. So positive and definite should be the spiritual individuality of every one, that, should even the beloved brother or sister whose spiritual life first nourished ours and brought us forward to completeness of character fall away (which the Apostle shows is not impossible – Heb. 6:4-6; Gal. 1:8), we would still live, being able to appropriate for ourselves the spirit of Truth.

Paul feared, and had reason to fear, that the Galatian Christians had not yet come to this condition of established character – that the Christ-life was not yet definitely formed in them. He said, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain" (Gal. 4:11); for already they were giving heed to seducing teachers and departing from the faith, showing that they were not established in the Truth, and

consequently not established in the spirit of the Truth, which is the spirit of Christ, and, hence, that Christ was not yet formed in them. – Verse 19.

Alas, how often we see among those who bear the name of Christ, and who have truly received the spirit of adoption as sons of God, that Christ is not yet formed in them! that they have not yet reached that degree of development which manifests a distinct spiritual individuality! They depend largely upon the spiritual life of others, and if their spiritual life declines these dependent ones suffer a similar decline; if they go into error, these follow, as did many [R3251 : page 375] of those Galatian Christians to whom Paul wrote. How is it, beloved, in your several cases? Apply the question to yourselves – Is Christ formed in you so fully that none of these things move you? that, however they may grieve you at heart, they cannot affect your spiritual life? This is what it is to have "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

A cloak of mystery and superstition has been thrown around this expression of the Apostle, evidently by the great Adversary of the Truth and the Church, to the effect that in some secret way, known only to the initiated, Christ personally comes into the consecrated soul and uses that soul simply as a machine; and that, consequently, the machine is about infallible, because Christ is using it; that for them to speak, or think, or act, or interpret the Scriptures, is for Christ to do it, in whose hands they are merely the passive agents. With this idea they generally go further, and claim that Christ personally talks with them and teaches them independently of his Word; and some go so far as to claim that they have visions and special revelations from the Lord. Some speak of this presence as Christ; some as the holy Spirit; and some speak of them interchangeably.

While there is a semblance of truth in all this, and while we remember that Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them...shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him;...and we will come unto him and make

our abode with him" (John 14:21,23), it is true that a more serious error could scarcely be entertained than this idea of personal infallibility because of the supposed mysterious presence of another being within.

Notice that this promise of the abiding presence of the Father and the Son is to those who *have* and *keep* the commandments of the Lord Jesus. Those, therefore, who ignore the Word of the Lord and have not his commandments – who do not know what they are, and hence cannot keep them, but who hearken to the voice of their own imaginations and note all the changing states of their own feelings, mistaking them for the voice of the Lord and follow the impressions **[R3251 : page 376]** arising from this source, instead of the commandments or teachings of the Lord – are quite mistaken in claiming this promise. Under their delusion they are following another spirit than the spirit of Truth; and unless recovered from the snare they must inevitably plunge deeper and deeper into superstition and error.

The first difficulty we meet in attempting to dispel this delusion from the midst of those infatuated with it, is the claim that this is a higher attainment in the spiritual life, up to which we have not yet measured. If the testimony of the Scriptures bearing on the subject is brought forward they say, "Oh, I see you have the head-knowledge, but you have not the Spirit, you have not Christ in you." They then proceed to tell how Christ is in them, and that he is "teaching them wonderful things," which we shortly discover to be quite out of harmony with the Word of God. The case is indeed a sad one when all Scripture testimony contrary to their belief is set aside with claims of superior revelations of Christ or the holy Spirit which other children of God do not enjoy, and that Christ personally dwells in them, etc., etc.

Who but these deceived ones cannot see that, if their theory be true – if God talks with them and answers all their queries aside from his written Word, the Bible, through mental inspiration, or by dreams, or by audible sound – then the Bible is to such a useless book, and time

spent in its study is so much time wasted. Who would "search the Scriptures" as for hid treasures, as the Lord enjoined and as all the apostles searched, if they could shut their eyes, or kneel, and have God make a special revelation to them, respecting the information desired. Surely any sensible person would prefer a special revelation on a subject, rather than to spend days and months and years examining and comparing the words of our Lord and the apostles with those of the prophets and the Book of Revelation ("searching what or what manner of time the spirit did signify"), if they could ask and have an inspired and infallible answer in a moment. None of God's consecrated ones should be thus misled of the Adversary. It is the stepping-stone to pride and every evil work; – to *pride*, because those who are thus deceived soon feel themselves honored of God above the apostles, who even in conference judged of the mind of the Lord as read in his Word and in his providential leadings in harmony with his Word (Acts 15:12-15); to *every evil work*, in that those thus puffed up fancy themselves infallible, and, separated from the anchor of truth, the Bible, Satan can soon lead them rapidly into the outer darkness of the world, or into yet darker delusions.

But the testimony of the Scriptures is quite contrary to this vaunting spirit. Paul says, "Know ye not...that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" and then he exhorts that we examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, or whether we have rejected the faith and thus become reprobates – no longer acceptable to God. (2 Cor. 13:5.) Every *true* child of God has respect to the commandments of God: he searches the Scriptures that he may know them, and is not left in ignorance of them; and, learning them, he endeavors to keep them, and the abiding presence of the Father and the Son is with all such so long as they continue to hold and to keep (obey) his commandments – to hold the Truth in righteousness.

To have the Truth and to keep it is not merely to accept it on the recommendation of some friend, and because it gives some comfort and costs nothing, and to hold it until some other presumed friend

dazzles the unsettled mind with some fanciful theory. The promise of the abiding presence of the Father and the Son is not to such. Christ is not in them; Christ is in the humble and sincere ones. He and the Father love and abide with them.

But how? To illustrate – a friend accompanying another to a railway station said, as he was about to board the train, "Remember, I will be with you all the way." He meant that his thoughts would be with his friend and that he would be concerned for his welfare, etc. In a similar, and yet in a fuller and broader sense, the Lord is ever present with his people. He is always thinking of us, looking out for our interests, guarding us in danger, providing for us in temporal and spiritual things, reading our hearts, marking every impulse of loving devotion to him, shaping the influences around us for our discipline and refining, and hearkening to our faintest call for aid or sympathy or fellowship with him. He is never for a moment off guard, whether we call to him in the busy noon hours or in the silent watches of the night. And not only is the Lord Jesus thus present, but the Father also. How blessed the realization of such abiding faithfulness! And no real child of God is devoid of this evidence of his adoption. Sometimes it is more manifest than at others; as, for instance, when some special trial of faith or patience or endurance necessitates the special call for special help, and forthwith comes the grace sufficient with a precious realization of its loving source. Thus

"E'en sorrow, touched by heaven, grows bright,
With more than rapture's ray,
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day."

Every true child of God has these precious evidences of sonship, and the roughest places in his pathway are so illuminated with divine grace that they **[R3251 : page 377]** become the brightest, and memory continues to refer to them with thankfulness; and faith and hope and love grow strong and inspiring.

Our Lord always links the progress and development of our spiritual life with our receiving and obeying the Truth, and every child of God should beware of that teaching which claims to be in advance of the Word, and that Christ or the holy Spirit speaks to such advanced Christians independently of the Word. The snare is a most dangerous one. It cultivates spiritual pride and boastfulness, and renders powerless the warnings and exhortations of the sacred Scriptures because the deluded ones think they have a higher teacher dwelling in them. And Satan, taking advantage of the delusion, leads them captive at his will.

These symbolic expressions of the Scriptures must be interpreted as symbols, and to force any unreasonable interpretation upon them manifests a culpable wilfulness in disregarding the divinely appointed laws of our mind, and the result is self-deception. When we read, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 Jno. 4:16), the only reasonable interpretation is that we dwell in the love and favor, and in the spirit or disposition of God; and that his spirit or disposition dwells in us. Thus God by his indwelling spirit works in us to will and to do his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13); and we are reckoned as not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in us. – Rom. 8:8,9.

Let us endeavor to have more and more of the mind, the Spirit of God – to have his Word abide in us richly (John 15:7; Col. 3:16) – to have and to keep his commandments, that the abiding presence of the Father and the Son may be with us; and that, realizing that the Christ-character and life are definitely formed in us, the hope of glory may be ours; for our Lord said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21.) How careful then should we be in **[R3252 : page 377]** seeking both to know and to do the will of God. Many indeed will come forth with the plea of their wonderful works, hoping to be admitted into the Kingdom, but only

those will be recognized who have done the will of the Lord, and who have no theories or works of their own whereof to boast.

