

IN CHRIST AND THE FLESH IN US

by H.H. Snell

A collection of articles and writings by H.H. Snell from In Christ and the Flesh in Us, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

3 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. In Christ and the Flesh in Us
1. In Christ and the Flesh in Us: Part 1
2. In Christ, and the Flesh in Us: Part 2

In Christ and the Flesh in Us

In Christ and the Flesh in Us: Part 1

Such is the Christian. Through infinite grace he is no longer before God in his sins and in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. He was “without Christ,” he is “in Christ,” he will be “like Christ.” A Christian, then, is not one who hopes to be, but one who is, in Christ. A man may be much reformed, and not in Christ. He may be earnestly taken up with religiousness, yet not in Christ. He may even be convicted, yet not converted. Those who stop short of Christ are still in their sins. To be in Christ is to be the workmanship of God—a new creation. Such have died with Christ, and are alive to God in Christ. It is an entirely new condition and standing. All is of God. The old things have passed away; all things have become new. Whatever, therefore, a man may think of himself, whatever changes may have been wrought in his outward deportment, or however esteemed he may be by others, he has no authority for calling himself a Christian, if he is not “in Christ.”

Nor is it correct to say that those who are in Christ were always in Christ, as some have asserted, because they confound purpose and redemption. We are told that “we were all by nature children of wrath, even as others.” The apostle seems gladly to acknowledge that he knew some who had been brought into this marvelous character of blessing prior to himself. He says, “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen... who also were in Christ before me.” (Rom. 16:7.) As to the purpose of God, we know that all those who compose the church of God were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is also clear that redemption, though accomplished more than eighteen hundred years ago, is only the present blessing of those who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and believed in the Son of God. Before that we were afar off; “but now, in Christ Jesus, we, who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Of such, too, it is truly written, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sine, according to the riches of his grace.” (Eph. 1:7, 11, 13.) No one, then, can be spoken of in a scriptural sense as in Christ Jesus, before he has received Him who “was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification” as his Savior. Before he was made alive (quickened) he was dead in trespasses and in sins—in the flesh; but, through a divinely-wrought faith in the Son of God, he has received eternal life, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He is associated with Christ in life, and by the Holy Ghost he is one with Him. This, too, he is entitled to know and to rejoice in, as Jesus said, “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (John 14:20.)

In the apostles' days persons were accredited as being “in Christ,” and they were spoken of, and written to, as such. For instance, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is addressed “to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus;” and the letter to the Philippians, “to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi,” thus showing that saints in those days, were ordinarily recognized as “in Christ Jesus.”

The truth is that the epistles describe men as either “in the flesh,” or as “in Christ Jesus.” The natural man, however cultivated or refined, however outwardly religious and benevolent, is nevertheless “in the flesh,” as to his state before God. He is in the first Adam, and dead in sins. He

needs spiritual life. This is why the gospel presents no thought as to mending or improving men in the flesh; on the contrary, it speaks of redemption, that is, taking out of a state of guilt and condemnation, and bringing into a position of blessing and nearness to God. For, however polished and amiable people appear, we are assured that “the carnal mind is enmity against God”—the will is in opposition to God. Thus man naturally, however refined, and generous, is only “corrupt tree, which cannot bring forth good fruit.” Neither law nor terrors, commandments nor judgments, make him fit for God. His whole history shows the opposition of his will to God's will, and exhibits the truth of the divine sentence, “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom. 8:8.) A verdict sweeping indeed but most just, and unmistakably plain and conclusive. Such is man! He “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14.)

Under those circumstances, as before observed, God has not proposed to mend the corrupt nature, but, in His infinite grace, has brought in redemption, in Christ, and through His blood. In this way we have deliverance from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin, and are before God on an entirely new standing in life and righteousness.

The sense of guilt has been cleared, in divine grace, by the death and blood-shedding of Jesus once for all; who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, suffered for sins, and died for our sins under the judgment of God. Thus all our need, as to sins and guilt, has been fully met in righteousness, and all who believe are justified by His blood, justified from all things. Instead, then, of guilt we have a purged conscience, for we know that all is now clear between us and God. Our sins and iniquities He will remember no more. Instead of imputing sins, He accounts us righteous, so that we have “no more conscience of sins,” are no longer guilty, but justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is God who justifies. We are also delivered from condemnation, because, when law was unable to produce good in us, on account of the unclean and corrupt qualities of our nature, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, condemned our old evil nature— “sin in the flesh.” Thus our old man, with its sinful passions and lusts, has been crucified with Christ; we have died with Him, who, in such wondrous grace, was made sin for us; who became our Substitute, and bore that condemnation which was due to us. The whole condemning power of God on account of sin having been poured upon Jesus, there is no condemnation left for us. Hence we are assured, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

But sin is the master of man naturally—it has dominion over him. Sin reigns unto death. He is the slave of sin, and cannot free himself. But God, in His grace, has set the believer free. He has died unto Christ, his Substitute. Neither sin nor law can have anything to say to a dead man. He that is dead is set free, or justified, from sin. You cannot charge a dead man with lust. Being then set free from sin, and become an object of divine favor, it is said of such, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” We are delivered, and brought to God. We are become servants to God. What an unutterable difference between being a slave of sin and a servant to God! We are alive to God in Christ, that “henceforth we should live, not to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again.” His death has brought us deliverance as well as peace. By it we have been forever freed from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin. Blessed indeed it is to grasp these precious realities!

We must not, however, forget that God has not only wrought, in His exceeding grace, to save us from wrath, but has acted agreeably to His own goodness and nature. Nothing less could suit Him than that we should be before Him in love, in conscious nearness and relationship in eternal glory. He is therefore bringing many sons to glory. Jesus once suffered for sins that He might bring us to God. Redemption is God's way of bringing us to Himself; the wisdom, work, and results are all for His glory, as well as for our eternal blessing. It was necessary, therefore, that the whole question of sin should be settled in righteousness, for the glory of God, as well as to meet our need. Atonement was for God; it fully answered the just demands of His throne. In this way God has been glorified, and we have been cleansed, delivered, and brought to God as purged worshippers.

God has also given us life—a risen and eternal life. It is His own gracious gift. Blessed be God! We read, “God hath given tons eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” It is life in Him who is risen from among the dead, and given to us as a present possession, to be known in activity and power in our souls. God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John 5:11, 12.) Christ, then, is our life, and “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death.” Christ lives in us, and we are in Him. We are, then, associated with Christ in life—a risen and eternal life. Hence we are addressed as “risen with Christ,” and consequently exhorted to “set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” The believer has passed out of death and into life. This transition scripture folly recognizes. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. We have also received the gift of the Holy Ghost. “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

The believer, therefore, is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—he is in Christ; he has died out of his old Adam standing in the death of Jesus, and has been quickened, raised up, and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He has been brought out, and brought in. Hence scripture speaks of us as “accepted in the Beloved,” “complete in him,” “preserved in Christ Jesus,” and “sanctified in Christ Jesus.” We are a new creation in Him who is Head of all principality and power, are always before God in Christ, in all His acceptability and nearness, and loved by the Father as He loves the Son. This is where redemption has brought us, where divine perfect love has set us, so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. We have died unto sin, died with Christ, and are alive unto God in Him. Having received remission of sins, we are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, joined to the Lord—one spirit. This is a man in Christ. “We were in the flesh,” but having died with Christ, and risen with Him, we have eternal life in Him, and are united to Him by the Spirit.

(To be continued.)

In Christ, and the Flesh in Us: Part 2

On, the marvelous depths and heights of divine grace! Its depths in embracing us when in our sins and guilt, exposed to the wrath of God, and its heights in bringing us to God in Christ for everlasting blessing. And so truly does scripture teach the reality of this translation from being in Adam to our present standing in Christ, that we are now spoken of as “not in the flesh,” “not of the world,” “not under law,” but “in the Spirit,” and “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” The important question for us is, How far have we received these truths into our hearts? How far have we mixed faith with the truth of God concerning what He has wrought in Christ? The practical point is, Do we habitually take our place when consciously dealing with God as in Christ? Those who have not received this truth may be trying to work themselves into nearness to God and be always disappointed, instead of taking in simple faith the nearness and acceptance in Christ which His own grace has given us. Those who are working and redoubling their efforts to get near, only prove that they have not yet entered upon the place in Christ in which divine grace has set them. Those who by faith take possession of it do rejoice therein, and rest in God's presence. Such are never so happy as when inside the veil, where the Lord Jesus is. They worship God, and in measure enter into the wondrous truth of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

But though the believer is not in the flesh, he sorrowfully finds that the flesh is in him. He learns through humbling experiences to say, “In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” He does not say, “In me dwells no good,” because he has a new life, and the Holy Ghost in him; but he says, “In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing;” for, though delivered from the Adam standing, he still has the Adam nature—the flesh, with its passions and lusts—that evil principle which is ready to serve the law of sin. He has, in fact, two natures: the old nature, “that which is born of the flesh, which is flesh;” and the new life, or new nature, “that which is born of the Spirit, which is spirit.” The new nature which is born of the Spirit is strengthened by the Holy Ghost which indwells us; so that, while the flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit is against the flesh in such antagonistic power, that we cannot do the things which we otherwise would. The delivered soul knows that he is the subject of the actings of these two opposing natures, and his conclusion is, “so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Rom. 7:25.)

The great trouble of every believer is not so much what he has done as what he is. It is the painful consciousness of having this evil nature—pride, self-will, and lust cropping up within, even if it does not come out. And the more his desire to live for the glory of God, the greater his sorrow at the garment being spotted by the flesh. This is his greatest enemy, his constant opponent, that upon which Satan and the world can act, and which neither time nor circumstances can improve, so desperately wicked is it, and deceitful above all things. The more we are occupied with it, the weaker we are toward it, because it becomes an object in the stead of Christ. The secret of power over it is to know that it has been crucified with Christ because of its incurable badness—to reckon it dead—to disallow its cravings, and to find all our springs of comfort and strength in Christ glorified—to “reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus

our Lord” (Rom. 6:6-11.) In the heavenly glory we shall not need so to “reckon,” for we shall be completely and forever delivered from it. But to so reckon now is because “the flesh” is still in us. Yet it is equally our privilege to say with the apostle, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I [that is, not the old nature] but Christ [my new life] liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh [that is, in this mortal body], I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20.) This is Christian life.

To be occupied with what the flesh is in its various activities and deceitful workings, is not to be reckoning it dead; to be regarding it as an antagonistic force to be overcome, is to reckon it living; but to be holding it dead in the death of Christ, as judicially put to death in Christ our substitute, and to find all our resources in Christ risen and glorified, is to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way we have power over ourselves, and can daily bring forth fruit unto God. The way of faith is always to look at things from God's standpoint, to take sides with Him who regards our old man as having been judicially set aside forever in the death of Christ, and who always sees us complete in Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

It is quite true that we are the Objects of the continual care and discipline of the Father of spirits. If we walk after the flesh, instead of after the Spirit, this may call for His loving rebuke and chastening; but that in no way interferes with the precious truth of our continual acceptance and standing in Christ, by whose one offering we have been perfected forever. The fact is that, through grace, we “are not in the flesh, but in Christ,” yet the flesh is in us; but our part is to reckon it as having been, before God and to faith, judicially put to death in Christ crucified, and thus to be so constantly occupied with the triumphant Son of God, as to find all our resources, all our strength, all our springs, in Him.

Nor does age, experience, or change of circumstances improve the flesh. It is wholly unimproveable, though its desires and habits, in youth and old age, in affluence or poverty, may show themselves differently. Its principles of lust and wilfulness remain the same. Paul had been in the third heaven, and heard unutterable things, which it is not possible for mortal man to speak. Was the flesh improved in him by such a wondrous change and experience? We are told that he needed “a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him,” lest he should be exalted because of the exceeding greatness of the revelations. Now surely, when in the glory, we shall not need such a thorn, neither did he when in the third heaven, but afterward; when among men, there was such tendency to the pride and lust of the flesh being stirred up, that a messenger of Satan was needed to act upon him, as a preventive of fleshly conduct. So deeply distressing and humiliating was this “thorn,” that he three times besought the Lord to take it away; but this could not be done, that the servant might not be exalted above measure. Instead of removing it, the Lord said unto him, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” His path, therefore, for the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage was to go forward, having no confidence in the flesh, but boasting in his weakness, that the power of Christ might rest upon him; for, said he, when I am weak, then am I strong. (2 Cor. 12:10.)

How vastly different was the experience of this honored servant of the Lord when in the third heaven, and when buffeted by Satan on earth! But was he not equally secure in Christ, when filled with anguish or irritation through the “thorn in the flesh,” as when hearing the unutterable

communications of paradise? Surely his standing before God in Christ was in no way altered by this remarkable change of circumstances and experience. And it is very important to observe this. For have not most believers their bright times and their dark times? Did not Israel taste the bitterness of Marah, and then realize the delightful change of Elim's palm-trees and wells of water? And do not most of God's children know what it is, on some occasions, to be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and at other times to be in heaviness and distress, having, the heart lacerated with the sorrows of the way? But are we not as secure and blessed in Christ, when in the trying path of humiliation and anguish, as when we are so happy in the Lord, so near, that it is only the thinnest film which appears to intercept our vision of Himself, and His own glory seems to shine down upon us? Surely it is always true that "ye are complete in him, who is the Head of all principality and power," and that no change of circumstance or experience, whether dark or bright, can in any degree shake our security and standing's in Him;" though it is quite true we may lose the enjoyment of this, if we are taken up with experience, or anything else, in the place of Christ. How wise, then, it is for the believer to abide in the Lord Jesus, to be occupied with Him; for then we have always blessing. "We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.)

So clearly does scripture recognize "the flesh," with all its evil capabilities, even in those who are born of God, that they are enjoined to "lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, and as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Peter 1:23; 2:1, 2.) Here we find persons who are born again instructed how they can grow in grace, &c., and charged not to let these dreadful workings of the old man come out. Again, because we are "risen with Christ," and hope to reign "with him in glory," we are exhorted thus— "Mortify" (or put to death) "therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" —the vile workings of the flesh, the things which the ungodly practice, and which bring down the judgment of God upon them. "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." Observe, scripture nowhere says that we are to crucify the flesh, because our old man has been crucified with Christ, and thus we are said to "have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;" but as risen with Christ, and having a new life in Him (though still having the flesh in us), we are so to reckon ourselves dead as not to suffer these things to live in us, because we have died with Christ. Again, therefore, we are enjoined to "put off anger, wrath, malice, filthy communication out of your mouth, and lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new." (Col. 3:1-12.)

Now it is clearly impossible that such injunctions should have been given to those who are born of God and risen with Christ, unless they still have "the flesh," in which is nothing good. Let us turn to another scripture on this point. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. 8:13.) This is spoken to those who are said to be "in Christ." Observe, it is not the body which is to be flagellated, or put to death, but the deeds of the body—those things which the body is capable of doing, which are in opposition to God's mind. Again, notice that the power for this is the Spirit of God; not flesh against flesh, but a new and almighty power given to us, by which we may practically keep in the place of death the workings of "the flesh." Nothing, then, can be more clearly taught in scripture than that the believer is "in Christ," who is his life, and one with Christ by the Holy Ghost; and, at the same time, that "the flesh" is in every believer. He is therefore a

compound of two natures; with one, “the mind,” he serves God's law; and with the other, “the flesh,” sin's law. The indwelling Spirit strengthens the new nature, and keeps us occupied with Christ, our righteousness and strength, so that we may reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, and thus practically hold as dead the buddings forth of “the flesh.” May the Lord graciously help us more and more in this!

It is important, however, to remember that the knowledge of having “the flesh” in us is of itself no hindrance to “our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;” but allowing it to come out practically does hinder it. We have not a bad conscience from its existence in us, because we know that the flesh, or the old man, has been judicially dealt with in the death of Christ. Neither need the believer sin. He is enjoined to sin not, and he has no excuse for sinning. “These things write I unto you that ye sin not.” It is, moreover, not correct for a believer to say sin is not in him, for “if we say we have no sin” —not sins, but sin, the corrupt nature, or old man— “we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” If, however, the believer does sin, or commit sins, the fruit of the Adam nature, he finds his conscience troubled, and his communion with the Father and the Son interrupted. It is a question of communion, not of salvation. Provision has graciously been made for it. Christ is our Advocate with the Father concerning it. Self-examination, self-judgment, repentance, and confession are wrought in our souls by the Spirit, and by the application of the word— “the washing of water by the word” —we become restored. The advocacy of Christ is based upon propitiation for our sins having been made, and He who takes up our cause is the perfectly righteous One. Hence it is written, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” (1 John 2:1, 2.)

On confessing, we are cleansed perfectly, forgiven in righteousness, on the ground of the sacrifice once offered; so that we are told, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8-10.) It is not the believer taking the place of a miserable sinner; but a believer taking the place before God of an offending naughty child, counting on the faithfulness and justice of God to forgive his sins because of the sacrifice of Christ, and to cleanse him, and thus to restore him to happy communion. This is the divine way of restoring an erring child of God. He may be the weakest and most faulty of God's children; still he is a child to whom the Lord does not impute sin, and never can be, strictly speaking, a miserable sinner, even when feeling the dreadful character of his sin, before God in confession.

Happy indeed are those who are occupied with the personal glory and excellencies, finished work, and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as to have always the comfort of their Father's love, and the joy of their security and completeness in Christ, and to be waiting for His coming! H. H. S.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net