

# Christ Lives in Me

by Elisabeth Elliot

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a restored relationship with Christ, which brings about a sense of peace, joy, and forgiveness, and allows us to live a life of self-giving and surrender.*

**Duration:** 30:32

**Scripture:** Hebrews 12:5

**Topics:** "Crucified With Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares the story of a woman who had turned away from the Lord and sought worldly pleasures. She became consumed by alcohol and lived a life of despair and selfishness. However, one day she found the strength to break free from the bottle and began a journey of redemption. Through repentance and surrendering everything to God, she experienced a transformation and found peace. The preacher emphasizes the importance of discipleship and the need to let go of worldly attachments in order to fully embrace the priceless treasure that God offers.

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## Transcript

Ephesians 4.24 says that we are to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. I think the teaching on loving oneself is a confusion, because to love is to desire the good of the object. If I start loving myself, I will be desiring my own good.

Love is always self-giving. So I find that very perplexing when people come up and give me this line about, but I have to learn to love myself. I think it's a confusion and a very destructive kind of confusion.

So I do what I can to try to sort that out. Love is described in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is very patient, very kind.

Love is very gentle. Love never vaunts itself. It's not puffed up.

It doesn't keep records of wrongs. Those things all refer to somebody else. They don't make any sense.

Lars and I have a couple of very good friends in St. Louis. They're the only black friends that we have ever spent a night in there, in whose home we've ever spent a night. We had a wonderful time.

I was speaking for their church, and the next morning at breakfast, I had the temerity to ask them if they had ever had any white folks staying overnight. And they smiled kind of sheepishly, and they said, no, they

never had. And I said, well, I have to confess, we have never stayed with black people either.

But we've just had such a wonderful experience with them. And when we go to St. Louis, which we seem to do practically every time we go anywhere since we fly TWA, we end up in St. Louis. So we often call Sister Bones.

The last name is B-O-W-E-N, but they pronounce it Bones. And she writes to me, and we talk to them on the phone. And I just had this letter from her, which I couldn't resist reading to you because it is such a beautiful illustration of this dramatic contrast that we're talking about between the old self and the crucified self.

Sister Bones wrote, Lars and Elizabeth, hold to your seats while I try to share another one of God's bombshell blessings with you about our third daughter, Joyce, who was always like her name, Joy. And she tells how she was married and moved to California and then began to change. She went strong for the liberated woman stuff, began saying things like, Who am I? I want to find myself, etc.

She was reading all kinds of strange books. She was kept down and depressed. She started seeing a counselor.

She told me about couch sessions. It was talk, talk, talk. In 1986, I'll never forget it, she called.

I was so happy. Joyce, I said. And there was a cold voice.

I've got to the bottom of my problem. I know the answer. You have? Joyce, what is it? It's you.

You're the cause. I was stunned. I can't describe how I felt.

I got off the phone, cried and cried and cried. I went to my pastor, we prayed, and I knew that I could never get through to Joyce. Only God could help.

I turned her over to him. September 91, she and her husband appeared at our door. She said they had come for my birthday, but I knew it was something more.

The turning point was the day before Thanksgiving. I saw that God had been working. Now, Lars and Elizabeth, open envelope number two and rejoice with me.

You know it's an original. Well, envelope number two had this poem in it, which Joyce wrote. There was this woman I used to know who long ago left the Lord.

The worldly pleasures she sought and found to her offered much reward. As mother of two, she was given their lives to shape and to mold. Little importance this must have been because love was replaced with scold.

The bottle and she became good friends. All cares were drowned with drink. It eased the pain and guilt from her past and of God she would not think.

The years passed by and further away her life sunk in despair. She lied, schemed, and would not look back. It seemed she just did not care.

One day the bottle lost its power to rid the pain from her life. The more she drank, the more she needed, but still there was strife. Then somewhere within her deepest heart a strength emerged sublime.

Fast away from the bottle she ran and now it's one day at a time. Months passed by and a strange thing happened. Her sleep was restful at last.

Thoughts of the times she had served the Lord came rushing back from the past. One night as she drifted off to sleep her brother Ronnie, and Ronnie had been killed, her brother Ronnie she saw, he stood there smiling at her with warmth, a future glimpse she foresaw. There in the darkness her eyes were opened.

She saw the Lord long last. Cried to Jesus to save her soul, repented her sins of past. Suddenly a calm came over her of such she could not explain.

The load she carried was lifted off. Thank God, in Jesus' name. And at the bottom she writes, Yes, Mother, your daughter repented and was saved, November 16th, 1991.

The vitality of the crucified life. Paul says, yet not I, but Christ. And I think that should be our motto, much more than thinking about loving ourselves.

Just those four words, not I, but Christ. The restored relationship with Christ means a restored relationship with everybody else. That's what happened with Joyce.

She wanted to have nothing to do with her parents because she knew whose side they were on. It was Christ. And she had rejected Christ, and so she rejected them.

And undoubtedly in those couch sessions she had been told that it was her parents' fault that she was in the state of depression that she was. And so she was raking up all this garbage, probably most of which never existed. And I really think that a lot of this that's going on is the devil's trick to get people to dishonor their parents.

And you know, the Bible says in Ezekiel, God said that he did not want to hear that fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. God said, I don't want to hear that. Whatever the fathers did, let's not be blaming the children's teeth being set on edge by the fathers having eaten sour grapes.

So we need to get our relationship with Christ restored. And whatever the problems are in marriage, I'm not a marriage counselor, but I'm forever being asked to be Ann Landers and everybody else. And all I can do is talk about Christ and a restored relationship.

Look at him. Take your burdens to the cross. Leave your burdens at the cross.

Do what he says. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live.

Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. If we must eat pig's food before we could appreciate the joy of the father's house, which is certainly what Joyce had been doing, then God will let us eat pig's food. In fact, he may make sure that we have to eat pig's food at some point.

We must eat it. There is no other way if we will not do what God wants. Any punishment.

Why does the loving parent punish the child? Because he does not want to damn him by leaving him to himself. I see my daughter struggling with seven children. Why does everybody have to sit nicely at the table? Well, because there are eight other people for whom you have to think.

We can't just do our own thing. We don't sit with elbows all over the table and throw the napkins around and get down from the chair because there are eight other people there that we have to consider. God will not consign us.

He does not want to damn us to our poor, sweet, stinking, miserable selves. He wants to deliver us. So how can we appreciate the joy of the father's house until we have at least had a few tastes of the pig's food? But remember that he comes with open arms.

The father was watching for that son to come back and he ran to meet him. And I once heard a whole sermon on those words, he ran to meet him, and it was preached by a man who had worked in a Muslim country, an Arab country, and he said, that man was undoubtedly an Arab, and he said, an Arab older man in a village would never even hurry, let alone run. And he walked across the platform the way that man would have walked.

He said, they have a way of swaying their long garments and walking with great dignity. That man, that father had completely forgotten his dignity when he saw that son on the horizon. And that's the way our father will welcome us.

You know, the gospel that we preach is not a gospel of punishment and vengeance and discipline. It is a gospel of forgiveness and love, deliverance, peace, joy. You and I will never be damned for any one of our sins, nor will we ever be damned for all of them put together.

We will be damned, condemned to punishment only for the sin that we will not confess, that we will not forsake, if we insist on clinging to our sins, insist upon retaining, for example, unforgiveness. The Bible says, your father will not forgive you. There is forgiveness only when we are willing to forgive and we have got to be willing to forgive.

We have to be willing to let go of our own sins. If we clutch them and cling to them, there will be no redemption. We have to come and this coming is a surrender.

It is opening my hands. Let's come to Jesus in the way that Jesus is talking about. A parent who, out of weakness or pity or lack of self-discipline, spares his child punishment, spares him the punishment that he deserves, the Bible says he hates him.

And we read in Hebrews, the twelfth chapter, I thought I had put a marker in there, but you know that passage, when you are disciplined, remember that you are being disciplined as a father disciplines his son. Here it is. My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline and do not lose heart when he rebukes you because the Lord disciplines those he loves and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as sons. Now, if Christ lives in me, then it is his life that I want to be manifest.

I am a clay pot, but I have within me a priceless treasure. Death has to work in me in order that life may be manifest. That's what the vitality of the crucified life is about.

If death does not go to work on myself, my selfishness, my old nature, then the world will never see the life of Christ. And the world is not going to read the Bible. The world is looking at you and saying, what is the difference in her life, in his life? What is it that makes this man kind and peaceful? A parent who doesn't punish the child teaches him that his wrongdoing is not really wrong, that it doesn't matter, that it's

inconsequential.

God honors us by teaching us that our actions have consequences. To refuse to allow the child to accept the consequences of his action is to deny him his personhood. You're not treating that child with the kind of respect that a parent should treat a child with.

We must respect them because they were made in the image of God and teach them to respect us. And if we don't teach them that respect, then it's our fault. But we cannot allow them to get away with what they want to get away with because the message there is you can do anything you want and there won't be any negative consequences.

And if the Lord gives us my daily bread, sorrow and pain, it is in order to lift me above my selfishness and to rescue me from that pit and to furnish me with what will ultimately be transformed or transfigured into joy. He gives me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. But he doesn't just drop it in my lap.

I have to give him the ashes. I have to give him my mourning. I have to surrender the spirit of heaviness.

And the exchange takes place. When I come to the cross, I have to give him my sins. And what does he give me? His righteousness.

I give him my losses. He gives me gain. I give him my sorrows.

He gives me joy. This is the exchanged life, the crucified life. He wants to make you and me into a clean clay pot, fit to hold the priceless treasure.

Now I want us to take a moment of quietness to contemplate, to commit, and to surrender. What is it that he's been talking to you about today? What is the one thing that you are going to do that's different after today? Now I wouldn't imagine that everybody in this room has been spoken to, necessarily. God knows the ones with ears to hear.

And I always pray that there will be those with ears to hear and those with hearts to obey. And you know who you are if God has spoken. And you know what you have to do.

My question is simply, will you? Jesus Christ holds out to me the priceless treasure, but the field must be bought at the cost of everything I possess. Jesus said, if you will not part with your possessions, you cannot be my disciple. Those are hard words.

Tough words. If you do not hate your father and your mother and your houses and your lands and everything else, you cannot be my disciple. It was his startling way of telling us the categorically imperative demands of discipleship.

If I cling to my own precious little plot of ground, my territory, my private space, I will have nothing with which to buy the field that contains the priceless treasure. If you found a field in which there was a million dollar diamond, most of us would certainly not hesitate to sell everything we had to go out and buy it because you would figure that you were going to get a whole lot back, a whole lot more back than what you gave up. That is the poorest illustration of what God is offering us.

If we gave him everything that we are and have and do and suffer, what kind of an offer is that? And yet he offers us heaven. He offers us gold. He offers us joy and eternal bliss, a different quality of life that starts

this Saturday afternoon.

Way back when I was in the poetry writing stage of my teens, I wrote a poem that, I'm not sure I can remember the whole thing, but it was called Sacrifice. Sacrifice, the word is not for me. Could I be loath to yield my meager pittance when thou dost offer heaven's gold to me? Let me obey thee even unto death that to the far-flung fields thy name be told.

Forsaking all, what, Lord, could I forsake that would not be repaid a thousandfold? My life is thine, Lord. Never let me seek to plan that life for which my Savior died. Thine is the power to will and do that in my body Christ be magnified.

I can't remember the rest. How many of you know Francis Thompson's poem, The Hound of Heaven? I see a few. Well, I just want to read you a few lines from that.

Francis Thompson, I'm told, died an alcoholic. And he was a lonely man, apparently. And he writes this beautiful poem where he pictures God as the Hound of Heaven who hounds him.

And he does everything he can to flee from God. He tries to find satisfaction in nature. And it flies from him.

And he hears a voice that says, All things fly thee who flyeth thee. And then he tries to find his satisfaction in the faces of little children. And they turn from him.

And he tries to find it in romantic love. But with deliberate speed, majestic instancy, with unperturbed pace, those feet followed and followed. And that hound is after him.

And finally, it gets him. And this is what the hound, God himself, says, All which I took from thee, I did but take not for thy harms, but just that thou might seek it in my arms. All which thy child's mistake fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home.

Rise, clasp my hand, and come. I can never get through that. All which thy child's mistake fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home.

I have written a book with the title, All That Was Ever Ours. From one of Amy Carmichael's poems, it says the same thing. All that was ever ours is ours forever.

And yet we cling as though somehow we're going to protect this little whatever it is. So let's say, take the world and give me Jesus. He loved me, therefore he sent his son to the cross with his son's full consent, remember.

He laid down his life. He said, no man takes it from me. He laid it down of his own will.

He did not evade suffering. And when he hung there on the cross, there was a taunt flung at him. He saved others.

Himself he could not save. And that spoke a world of truth that those mockers didn't have a clue about. It was absolute truth.

He could not save me and save himself. Think of the agony in the garden when he knew what lay before him. And he said, if it is possible, oh my father, let this cup pass.

But the next prayer, if it is not possible, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. And you cannot refuse God's dealings with you and save somebody else. Jesus said, if you lose your life for my sake, you'll find it.

You'll find your true self. The whole world is desperately looking to find its true self. And there's only one way to find it, and that is to fling your life away.

We are expendable. We are totally disposable. We are to be broken bread and poured out wine.

I am a clay pot. Every day, death is at work in me that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in this mortal body. Death is the key to life.

There is no life without death. The vitality of the crucified life is evidenced in the lives of holy people. There is a vitality, an energy, a force, a power of life, a joy, a serenity that is totally missing in the rest of the world.

Where does it come from? From a crucifixion, my life nailed to a cross. I cannot save myself and save anybody else. He came to give us life, to fulfill in us what he set out to make in the very beginning, a people perfectly free, perfectly good, perfectly in harmony with himself, and therefore perfectly happy.

But what is my part? It is to side with him. To side with him. To bring my will into harmony with his, into alignment.

Are you feeling powerless? The powerlessness may be not because God refuses to grant you the power that you're hammering on his door asking for, but because we refuse to be crucified. It says in 2 Corinthians 13, for he, Jesus, was crucified in weakness. Think of that.

The hands that made the worlds nailed. The mind that conceived the hinge on the lid of a spider's eye. The mind that created the atom and the galaxies and the black holes and the quasars and the black dwarfs and the sunsets.

He was put into the hands of wicked men and nailed to a cross. Crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, Paul says, we are weak in him.

My deepest consciousness of my weakness is my strongest claim on the power of God. My consciousness of helplessness is my claim, Lord, you are my helper. My need of a refuge makes me understand what it means to say, God is my refuge.

I have needed a refuge many times in my life, but I wouldn't have ever known what that verse means if I hadn't needed the refuge. Are you willing to be crucified in weakness to acknowledge, Lord, I'm a mess. I'm a total flop.

I'm a loser. I'm a throwaway. Let him nail you to the cross and give you power.

Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power, we will live with him to serve you, Paul says. When I talk to young people who are thinking about doing summer missionary work, and they ask me for advice on being a missionary for six weeks, and I say, don't even think of wanting to go to the, even for a summer program unless you're prepared to be a servant. Do you think you're qualified to be a missionary? And if they start telling me all their qualifications, I tell them, look, if you think you're qualified, you're not.

Anybody that thinks he's qualified, Paul said, there is no question of our being qualified in ourselves. Our qualification comes from God. Why am I nothing but a clay pot in order that the excellency of the power may be of God? Am I qualified to stand up here and talk to a group like this? Am I qualified to sit down and write a book? Am I qualified to speak on the radio? No.

There is no question of my being qualified in myself. But God does give me the strength to do what he tells me to do. And whatever that thing is that God has been speaking to you about today, he will give you the strength to do that, but you have got to get yourself up off your seat and do it.

Just do it. I just was reading Oswald Chambers the other day. It amazes me that that book of his, My Atmosphere is Highest, has been a bestseller ever since 1900, I guess.

I don't think people read that. They couldn't possibly read that and like it. Why is it a bestseller? Well, just because people have heard the name, I guess, and they like to have a devotional book on their bedside table, but I thought to myself, I cannot imagine that anybody reads this book with much care and likes it.

For one thing, he says straight out, don't ask God to help you do something. Do it. And if you do it, you set yourself to do it, God will help you.

I'm sure he was using slight exaggeration there just to get our attention, but we can pray that God will help us, and I pray for that all the time, but there's no sense staying on your knees when it's time to get up. You know, he told Moses to quit praying and get up there and do something. And there is a time to pray and there is a time to shut up and do it.

If we take the initiative, if we will to die and we quit the thing that he's been telling us to quit and do the thing that he's been telling us to do, the power will be supplied. It will be supplied. He has never once commanded anything without providing the enabling power.

There will be a surge of vitality, a new sense of freedom, the vitality of the crucified life. Life of a totally and astoundingly different quality. Because it's Christ.

It's Christ himself. Christ in me. Christ now.

Christ forever. We've talked about chasing the wind. We've talked about a different quality of life, the crucified life, and the life of Christ in me.

I want to close with the words of the last stanza of F. W. H. Meyer's poem, St. Paul. These were the words that came to my mind when I found out that my husband Jim was dead. So through life, death, through sorrow, and through sinning, Christ shall suffice me, for he hath sufficed.

Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning. Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

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