

Christ in Me

by J. Sidlow Baxter

The true Christian life originates with a supernatural spiritual transition (conversion) and consists in a supernatural transfusion, seeking to express itself through the life we live in the body.

Duration: 37:56

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the true Christian life and its importance for our eternal destiny. He presents four metaphors for conversion: transition, transfusion, transmission, and translation. The first metaphor, transition, is illustrated by Peter's words in 1 Peter 2:9, emphasizing the move from darkness to light. The preacher emphasizes the need for believers to maintain an awareness of their indwelling Savior, even in the midst of daily tasks and challenges. Finally, he discusses the purpose of God's salvation, which is not just to rescue us from damnation, but to provide everlasting rescue through Christ.

Transcript

Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and David said, and we say this morning, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. Lord, draw from our hearts the adoration, the praise, the worship, the thanksgiving, that are due to thy great and glorious name, and by the same spirit enable us now in the quietness and the loveliness of this morning hour, in the reading and the meditation of thy word.

Help us by that same spirit to worship thee in spirit and in truth, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to talk to you for a little while about some immortal words of Pauline's spiritual autobiography, in Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20.

I live, yet not I, but Christ is living within me, and the life which I now live in the body, for the word flesh here means the body, the life which I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Before I dare to make my first reverent comment upon it, let me deliberately read it again. I live, no I don't, yet not I, but Christ is living within me, and the life which I now live in the body, I

live no longer on the old principle of self-management, but on the new principle of Christ-monopoly.

The life which I now live in the body, I live by faith, by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Now, with these imperishable and very precious words before us, I want to ask and briefly to answer the always pertinent question, what is the true Christian life? That is, the Christian life according to the clear teaching of our New Testament. All around us today there are decent living, well-meaning people who rather glibly call themselves Christians, who nevertheless, in the New Testament sense, are not Christian believers at all.

And inasmuch as our eternal destiny on the other side of the grave hangs upon whether we are or are not Christian believers after the New Testament pattern, no question can be of more intense moment than just this, what is the true Christian life? Now, with this testimony of Paul open before us just now, I want to submit to you that the Christian life may be helpfully synopsized in four colorful transes, t-r-a-n-s-e-s, four transes. Which are these? One, Transcision. Two, Transfusion.

Three, Transmission. And four, Translation. Transcision, Transfusion, Transmission, Translation.

They are all in the text as we shall presently see. Take the first of them. The true Christian life according to the New Testament originates with a supernatural spiritual transition.

Now, that prepositional prefix, trans, always has the twofold meaning of out of and into. Out of some location or condition, into another location or condition. We talk about transatlantic and transpacific and transoceanic.

Now it looks like becoming translunar, and who knows, it may become transtellar. Maybe it's good to see the Christian life under these four transes. That prepositional prefix trans is very much in vogue today.

Now, as I was remarking, it always has the idea of a coming out of and a passing into, trans. And the true Christian life originates with a supernatural spiritual transition, a coming out of and a passing into. We popularly call that initiatory experience being converted.

Now I like that good old healthful term, conversion, and I like it because I am a converted man. And when you have gone through a revolutionary experience of true conversion, you can never doubt the reality of it anymore. As we say in Britain, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

And when you've really experienced conversion to Christ, you can never, never doubt the reality of it again. All the doubters may go on doubting, and all the skeptics may go on disbelieving, and all the pooh-poohers may go on pooh-poohing, but it never shakes you again. When once you have experienced conversion to Christ, that settles the reality of it for you.

Why do I say that with such emphasis? Oh, for a very simple reason. I suppose most of us who gather together for these delightful days at Thyle are lovers of the Lord Jesus. We are his believing people, his disciples.

We are converted and we are born again. But no preacher could take a crowd like this entirely for granted. We may have some unconverted friends among us this morning, and there may be here some birds of an intellectually fine feather.

And while I talk about conversion, these birds of an intellectual fine feather, they're sitting here secretly preening themselves and inwardly congratulating themselves and saying, you'll never get me down to this business of getting converted. Don't talk to me about being saved, you know, I'm above all that sort of stuff. Now, dear bird of a fine feather, you pipe down.

You listen to me. If for no other reason than this, I used to be one of your fraternity, and I used to sit in the rear seats of the sanctuary, and when the preacher was preaching the gospel, I would self-congratulatingly say, you'll never bring me down to this business of getting converted. You'll never persuade me that I need to be saved.

And here I am at Thyle in 1975, glorying more than ever that I'm converted. You see, unconverted friend, when you start placarding the fact that you don't believe in conversion and don't believe in this business of getting saved, you're simply advertising the fact that you know nothing about it. You're a complete ignoramus.

So I ask you, respectfully, but very decidedly, I ask you, listen with both ears. You may get converted this morning. Indeed, that's my business with you.

Now, as I was remarking, conversion is a transition. It's coming out of and passing into. Oh, friends, there is a simply fascinating variety of metaphors and figures of speech in the New Testament expressing different aspects of this wonderful experience that we call conversion.

That's a study all in itself. Let me pick out almost at random just three of these New Testament metaphors for conversion. I'll take one from Peter and one from Paul and one from our blessed Savior himself.

Take Peter's metaphor in his first epistle, chapter 2 and verse 9. Do I need to remind you? Peter was a big, bonny, brawny, sinewy, sun-bronzed outdoor man, a regular country bumpkin, Simon Peter. And in accord with that, when Peter wants a figure of speech, he invariably goes to the realm of nature, and so he does in this matter of conversion. He says this, show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of, mark the transition, out of darkness into his marvelous light.

That's a pretty sweeping transition. There are no two commodities which are more hostile to each other than darkness and light. They simply will not cohabit.

But when Peter uses this acute metaphor, he's not just indulging poetic elasticity or extravagant hyperbole. He's talking downright reality to people who knew it by experience. Show forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Dear brothers and sisters in our holy calling and visiting friends, that is thrilling but sober truth. Every true conversion to Christ, whether it happens with volcanic suddenness, or whether it is like the outcome of a slowly developing beautiful Mediterranean dawn, makes no essential difference. Every true conversion to Christ is nothing less than a coming out of crass natural darkness into a transforming new discovery of God.

Well, that's Peter's metaphor. When you pass from Peter to Paul, of course, you are encountering a very different type of personality. Paul was a genius by heredity, and he was a scholar by careful and prolonged training.

He was a doctor of the law. He was the lawyer of the apostolic band. And in consonance with that, as often as not when Paul wants a metaphor, he goes to the law courts.

And in that tremendous disquisition, which we call the Romans, that's precisely what he does. He says, as he sees the prisoner in the dock and hears the judge pronounce him guilty and under sentence, he says, God has brought us out of condemnation into justification. Instead of guilty sinners with a Damocles sword hanging over our guilty necks, now, because of what Christ has done on our behalf, the record is washed white, our guilt is obliterated, and we become covered head to feet with the imputed righteousness of our sinless sin-bearer Christ, out of condemnation into justification.

That's one of Paul's metaphors, and it expresses the judicial aspect of conversion, out of condemnation into justification. Albeit perhaps the most arresting of all these New Testament figures of speech for conversion, perhaps the most arresting is the one used by our Lord Jesus himself in a quite famous passage, John chapter 5. He says this, and oh, if you're here this morning unconverted, listen. This is the incarnate Son of God speaking.

He says this, Verily, verily, I say to you, he that believeth my word and on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into the crisis, the judgment, but is, mark, mark, the trans here, but is passed out of death into life. And of all transitions, the acutest is the transition from death to life. Why, even physically that's true.

You can't be a bit dead and a bit alive. In bodily health you may be failing, you may be an invalid, but as long as you're alive you're not dead, and the minute you're dead you're no longer alive, and there's no middle territory. And what is true physically is equally true spiritually.

I'm not the kind of preacher who likes to segmentize his audience into this category and that category and the other, but I can't help solemnly reflecting just now as I address you, that every one of us in this service this morning is in either one or the other of these two categories. One, spiritually alive to God in Christ, or spiritually dead and perishing, unsaved in unregeneracy. Which are you? Oh, it's a great thing to know that transition.

Listen, I live, no I don't. The old Saul is gone. There's a new man in his place, Paul.

I live, no I don't. There's been a mighty transition. No longer Saul, but the new man, Paul.

Well, that's that. Now look at the second of my two, of my four trances. First of all, transition.

Out of and into. And then transfusion. Now that word transfuse means to introduce something that was not hitherto there.

And if the true Christian life begins with that supernatural transition, the true, true Christian life consists in a supernatural transfusion. The very life of our risen Savior is regeneratngly transfused into our being by the Holy Spirit. And because the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three merely, but three in one and one in three, not just a trinity, but a triunity, in having the Holy Spirit, I have the living Savior occupying my inner being.

Oh, brothers and sisters, in our holy calling, that is the sweetest and deepest and loveliest mystery of the Christian life. Christ liveth in me. Do I need even to remind you? It's in that precious, present, continuous tense.

Christ is living, is living, is living in me. Not just as a diffused influence, but in the warmth of his loving personality. Jesus himself is living in me.

Please turn the tape over now and continue listening at this point on track two. This is track two. Christ is living, is living, is living in me.

Not just as a diffused influence, but in the warmth of his loving personality. Jesus himself is living in me. Excuse me, friends.

Hallelujah. Now, just because that is true, the New Testament ideal for the Christian life is that there shall be a continuous diminution of selfism and the progressive development of Christ-ism. I mean this.

You and I, by our natural heredity, are constitutionally egocentric, self-centered. We are now meant to become Christ-ocentric, or Christ-centered. He is to be the new and vital core of my life, the new mind within my mind, the new will within my will, the new person within my personality, the new love that expresses itself through my emotions, the new life expressing itself through my life.

Christ lives in me. Now, because that is so, there never needs to be, and there never ought to be, one fleeting minute when you and I lose the precious consciousness, or at least the subconsciousness of our Master's indwelling. You and I, as Christian believers, can't always be on the mountaintop of transfiguration, seeing heavenly visions, and hearing heavenly voices, and experiencing sensory ecstasies.

I'm glad that the Christian life is not a succession of such emotional luxuries as that. I don't think these fragile, nervous systems of ours could endure too much of that. Far more often we have to be on the dead-level plane of day-to-day humdrum monotony, the common round and the daily task, and sometimes we have to be in the valley of the shadow, drawing our new Jerusalem blade and doing mortal combat with Apollyon, Beelzebub, Diabolos, the adversary, the devil.

And at times like that you don't feel like shouting, Hosannas. But the point I'm making is, whether we are on the sunlit mountain summit, or on the dead-level plane of humdrum day-to-day monotony, or whether we are down in the valley of some trouble or temptation, if what Paul says here is true, there should never be one minute when we lose the wonderful awareness of our indwelling Savior. And even when the upper strata of the mind must be occupied with a multiplicity of mundane matters, in the office, in the workshop, wherever we are, the lower part of the mind that they call the subconscious, all the time underneath everything else, we should be carrying this unobliterable awareness of the indwelling Savior.

Is that your experience? Well, it's meant to be. You know, I have heard certain preachers and teachers tell us, and I have read certain books on holiness which tell us, that sanctification or holiness consists in the eradication of the self. I don't doubt for one minute the sincerity of those brethren who so teach, but I'm certain that they are aberrant, they're away from the scripture.

After all, the self is the basic self-conscious human ego, and the eradication of the self would be nothing less than the abolition of the personality. The New Testament teaches no such Christianized form of Buddhism as that, but the New Testament does teach that what I basically am in my human nature is to be suffused with the life of God's dear Son. And instead of self-eradication, there is to be sublimation of all that I am by being enveloped in the life of Christ.

You know, far too many of us Christian believers have the idea that the Christian life is to run on the battery system. I think you'll know what I mean. Being periodically charged to the point of fullness, and then running down to exhaustion point.

No, no, no. The Christian life was never meant to be run on that sort of basis. You know what I mean.

People go to a Bible conference or a conference like this, and when they go back home they are completely changed for three weeks. Or else they read some epochal volume, the life of some outstanding saint, and when they close the book they say, ah yes, I always knew there was an experience like that. I've got it.

And they're completely transfigured for three weeks. Or else they have an all night of prayer. They bring things to a self-precipitated crisis.

And while the other members of the family are sonorously snoring in their comfortable beds, these Jacobs amid the curtains of the night, they're wrestling at their brook Jabbok. And when the morning dawns, the sun breaks on them, and they go forth like giants refreshed with new wine. And everybody knows they're different, and sure they are, for three weeks.

And then they're back again to the miserable subnormal, or the disappointing poor average. Why? Well you know as well as I do. It's because they're resting on a crisis instead of on Christ.

The true Christian life, see, let these lights preach for a minute. The true Christian life doesn't run on the battery system, it runs on the electric circuit principle. And what is the electric circuit principle? Reduced to the irreducible minimum, it's simply continuous current by continuous contact.

I have no power at all over the electric current of the heavenly life of Christ, even the Holy Spirit. But I do have power over the contact. And when I keep the contact by regular, unhurried, daily, secret lingerings in prayer, when I keep the contact by daily, prayerful browsing in the book, when I keep the contact by daily, humbly, even though clumsily, bearing my witness for Jesus, and when I keep the contact by fellowship, fellowshiping with other Christian believers, and when I keep the contact by resolutely keeping out of my life all compromise with the doubtful and the wrong and the evil, when I keep the contact, the electric current is all the time flowing in, moment by moment I'm kept in his love, moment by moment I'm life from above.

I live, yet not I, transition. But Christ liveth in me, transfusion. And now as quickly as I can, I'm just nicely in time.

We're doing very well, really. You see, we lost a lot of time at the outset on this blessed desk. However, very briefly, let me now hurry to my close this morning.

First transition, then transfusion, and now transmission. The life that I now live in the body. Ah, you see, this new life which comes to us by a supernatural transition, and continues in us by an equally supernatural transfusion, now seeks to express itself through the life which we live in the body.

And you know, I'm touching on a very sensitive point here, sensitive to every Christian believer, because all of us who are head over heels in love with our heavenly master, we just long to serve him, don't we? But nine out of every ten of us, I surmise, when we think about service, have a mental astigma. We think that service consists in doing something, in going somewhere, in speaking something. Well, we're wrong.

There will always be a need, and a place, for the doing, and the saying, and the giving, and the going. But in its quintessence, Christian service is being. It's that that gives quality and meaning to all the other.

Now, you younger folks here, get hold of this while you're still young. Serving Christ is not indefatigable doing, doing, doing, doing, doing. I've known many a Christian worker come to a nervous flop, which is just what Satan wants.

That doing, doing, doing, doing. Well, there'll always be a place for it, but that's quite secondary. You see, it's like this.

My royal master does not ask simply for my physical activity, or even for my mental productivity. He wants my total conductivity. My master does not call me to be a kind of subsidiary creator.

He wants me to be his spirit-filled transmitter. And when he gets the undisputed monopoly of my personality, then it becomes Christ in me, and Christ through me. And my very personality becomes his living pulpit, and my daily behavior becomes an incarnated sermon.

And when I'm not doing, or saying, but just living Christ, and I'm all the time expressing him, that is the purest and deepest Christian service. Now, you can all see me very well this morning because of the lights along the platform here. I can't see you very distinctly, but I can see this.

Many of you here this morning will never see 50 again. You've done your best to disguise it, but you've failed. And you know, when we get to our 50s and 60s and 70s, we tend to say, oh well, the bloom and beauty of youth have gone, and the vigor of middle life has subsided, and now I'm in the elderly bracket.

I'll have to leave service to the younger men and women. Wrong! No, it's just at that time that we ought to be serving him more than ever. Our very faces should be shining with the sanctifying Savior who possesses us.

Don't you think so? Did you never read those lovely lines by Beatrice Cleland, perhaps the deffest lady poet in recent English history? She wrote this beautiful sonnet as a tribute to the person who led her to the Savior, but in so doing, with delightful artlessness, she has expressed the very quintessence of Christian service. Not only by the words you say, not only in your deeds confess, but in the most unconscious ways is Christ expressed. Is it a beatific smile or a holy light upon your brow? Oh no, I felt his presence when you laughed just now.

For me it was not the truth you taught. To you so clear, to me so dim, but when you came to me you brought a sense of him, and from your eyes he beckons me, and from your lips his love is shed, till I lose sight of you and see the Christ instead. Oh brothers and sisters, that's the essence of service.

And to close, translation. Are you getting these trances now? One, transition. Two, transfusion.

Three, transmission. And four, translation. Have you ever found yourself asking, what is the deepest purpose of God in saving us? Is it that you and I shall be everlastingly rescued from the damnation of Gehenna where the flame is never quenched and the worm never dies? Well, whatever that fearful terminology may connote, thank God salvation in Christ is everlasting rescue from that.

But that's not the deepest purpose of God in saving us. Is it that you and I shall inherit an eternal weight of glory in that city of the apocalypse with its pearly gates and golden streets and flashing mansions and

crystal sea and never-ending splendor? Well, whatever that language foretells is unutterably wonderful, but that's not the deepest purpose of God in saving us. If you want to know it, it's here in Romans 8. For whom God did foreknow, he did also predestinate.

Now that word foreknow sweeps us back into an eternity gone. For whom God did foreknow, he did also predestinate. That sweeps us right on to an eternity yet to be.

So here you have the whole sweep of the divine purpose. All things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow from the eternal past, he did also predestinate into the eternal future, that they should be made like unto the image of his Son.

Oh, that is the deepest, highest, biggest purpose of God in saving you and me. In the blissful consummation which is yet to be, you and I, hell-deserving sinners though we are, having been washed in the crimson of Calvary, having been born again by the heavenly Spirit, having been sanctified and finally glorified, we are going to be presented before our Creator Father as the beautiful replicas of Jesus. Why, that's the very last glimpse you get of the saints in the New Jerusalem in the last passage of the Bible.

They shall see his face and his name shall be written on their foreheads, which is only a beautiful, symbolical way of saying they'll be so like him that when you look at them you'll see a perfect mirror of Jesus. Oh, ten thousand hallelujahs. That's what it's all leading to.

Will somebody say hallelujah? That's better. Anyway, we're through, Mr. Chairman. But don't you think this is a thrilling theme, friend? That's the Christian life, its beginning, its inmost meaning, and its infinitely glorious destiny.

Transition, transfusion, transmission, and at last, translation. Now may the grace of the blessed Lord Jesus, and the amazing and eternal love of God the Father, the blessed presence and power of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us this day and every day. Amen.

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