

The True Christian Life

by J. Wilbur Chapman

A true Christian life consists of regeneration, consecration, and sanctification, which are the three stages of a life in the heavenly places.

Topics: "Christian Living", "Sanctification"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the progression of a true Christian life using three key texts from the Song of Solomon, symbolizing regeneration, consecration, and sanctification. The journey is likened to the three divisions of the ancient tabernacle, emphasizing the importance of passing through the altar of sacrifice, consecration of a clean life, and entering the holy of holies to enjoy God's presence. Through these texts, Chapman illustrates the transformation and beauty that comes from surrendering to Christ, allowing Him to work in our lives as Prophet, Priest, and King.

Transcript

TEXT: "My beloved is mine, and I am his."--Sol. Song 2:16.

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."--Sol. Song 6:3.

"I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me."--Sol. Song 7:10.

These three texts should be read together, and the significant change found in each text as the thought unfolds should be studied carefully. They remind one of three mountain peaks one rising higher than the other until the third is lifted into the very heavens. Indeed, if one should live in the spirit of this third text he would enjoy what Paul has described as a life in the heavenly places, and his picture of Christ would be surpassingly beautiful. At the same time the three texts give us a complete picture of a true Christian life. The first text may be regeneration, the second text consecration, and the third text sanctification.

The Jews counted this Book, the Song of Solomon, as exceedingly sacred. They hid it away until the child had come to maturity before he was allowed to read it, and it was to them the holy of holies of the Old Testament Scripture. These texts are also like the division of the ancient tabernacle. There was first of all the outer court where the altar of sacrifice was to be found--and this must be constantly kept in mind, for no one can say "my beloved is mine" until he has passed the altar of sacrifice. It is only by faith in Jesus Christ that we are adopted into the membership of the family of God.

The second division was the holy place, where was found the laver. Here the priests made themselves clean, and they could not minister in the presence of Jehovah until they had been made clean from all earthly defilement. This second text gives us the same thought, for here the writer changes the order exactly and says, "I am my beloved," instead of saying, "My beloved is mine." This is consecration and the consecration of a clean life. God will not accept or use that which is unclean, and it is only as we come to the place where we allow him to have full control of our lives that we realize we are his.

The third division of the tabernacle was the holy of holies, where the high priest made his way once a year that he might stand in the presence of Jehovah. In this third text, where the writer says, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me," we have come to the place in our experience where if his desire for us controls our living we are in the holy of holies indeed; where we can see him and enjoy his presence.

I

"My beloved is mine." This is regeneration. A minister once preaching to his congregation said, "Let every one say Jesus," and from all over the congregation there came the music of his name. "Now," said the minister, "Let all those who can, say 'my Jesus,'" and the response was not so hearty. A line ran through the congregation separating husband from wife and parents from children. It is only by faith in Christ and by the operation of the grace of God that we can experience this first text. Two things are true concerning this point.

First: He wants to make better all that we have. Whatever may be our natural characteristics, he can make all that we have more beautiful.

One day in Colorado I wanted to make a journey to the summit of Pike's Peak, only to find that throughout the entire day the train was chartered. I was turning away in despair when a railroad man said, "Why do you not go up at three o'clock to-morrow morning, for then," he said, "you can see the sun rise, and the sight is beautiful." So the next morning we started. Just as I was going on the train a railroad man said, "When you come to the sharp turn in the way as you go up, look over in the Cripple Creek district and you will see a sight never to be forgotten." We climbed higher and higher, leaving the darkness at the foot of the mountain, until at last we came to the place indicated and I looked away, only to be intensely disappointed. The sight was almost commonplace. As we pursued the journey upward finally we came to another place, where I heard some one give an exclamation of delight. As I looked in the same direction there was a marvelous transformation. I could see before me a mountain which looked like a white-robed priest and another like a choir of angels and still another like a golden ladder reaching up into the skies, and all because the sun had risen upon the same scenery which a moment ago was uninteresting. If Christ could only thus take possession of our lives and become our Savior the transformation would be quite as great.

Second: He is ours to exercise in our behalf all that he is as Prophet, Priest and King. His office of Prophet relates to the past, his office of King to the future when he shall be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, but his office as Priest is now being fulfilled and he is my great High Priest to intercede for me with God and make explanation for all my weakness.

Adelaide Proctor has given us the story of a young girl who was in a convent in France, whose special work it was to attend the portal and keep the altar clean. The war swept over France, the battle raged near the convent, many of the soldiers were killed and a number injured. These were borne into the hospital

that they might be nursed back to strength, and one of them was given to this young girl. Her nursing was successful, but he tempted her to leave the convent. They made their way to Paris, where she lost everything that makes life worth living. Then, just a wreck of her former self, she came back again to die within the sound of the convent bell. She touched the portal and instantly it was opened, not by a girl such as she had been but by a woman such as she might have been--true and noble. She bore her in her arms to her old cell, nursed her back again to a semblance of her old strength, and then she slipped into her old place to answer the portal and keep the altar clean, and not a nun in all the convent ever knew that she had sinned. This is Christ's ministry in our behalf at this time. Making up for my weakness, answering for my defects, he is my High Priest.

II

"I am my beloved's." This is really better than the first text, because if he is mine, and faith is like a hand of the soul, then faith may grow weary and the result would be sad; if I am his and he holds me then that is different. In John the tenth chapter, the twenty-eighth to the thirtieth verses, we have a picture of the true sheepfold and of the place where the child of God may rest, held in the hand of God and of his dear son. "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them unto me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." What a joy it is to know that we are his!

First: His by redemption, for we are redeemed not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. "Ye are not your own but ye are bought with a price."

Second: We are his because God gave us to him; in his wonderful intercessory prayer Jesus said, "Thou gavest them to me," and again, "Ye are not our own."

Third: We are his because again and again we have said so with our lips. How true the text is, then, in the light of the Scripture! If this is true then what is consecration? It is not giving God something, for how could we give him that which is already his own? Consecration is simply taking our hands off and letting him have his way with us in everything.

The late George Macgregor used to tell the story of one of the bishops of the Church of England, who had an invalid wife and who never could surrender beyond a certain point. He was unwilling to say that he would give up his wife, for God might call him to some mission he could not perform, and she had been the constant object of his care. But at last he won the victory and rose from his knees to say to his friend that the surrender should be complete, and then they went into the room of his invalid wife to tell her. With a sweet smile upon her face she said, "I have reached the same decision and you can go to the ends of the earth if need be." That night the old bishop's wife died and when they went across the hall to tell the bishop there was no answer to their knock. When they entered the door they found the bishop with eyes closed, hands folded and heart still. He, too, had gone. God did not want to separate them. He wanted them to be united, their wills surrendered to him and then he would send them in the same chariot up into heaven.

III

"I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me." If we would know God's desire for us we have only to study the Scriptures, and if we should fulfill his desires we would have an experience of heaven upon earth.

First: It is his desire that we should be holy. Ephesians 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Holiness in not sinlessness, it is to the spiritual nature what health is to the physical life. In other words, God desires that we should be spiritually healthy, and this we cannot be with secret sins in our lives.

Second: It is his desire that we should be sanctified. 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication."

Sanctification is not sinlessness, it is separation. It is absolutely useless to think of pleasing God if we are in touch with the world in any way, for since the days of the crucifixion it has been against him.

Third: It is his desire that we should present ourselves unto him in the sense above suggested--namely, that we should take our hands off from ourselves and allow him to direct and to control his own possession. Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Romans 6:13, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." In these expressions the tense of the verb indicates that the action is to be definite and that it is to be once and for all. He has certain desires for us also expressed in the seventeenth chapter of John.

First: He desires that we should have joy. Joy is better than happiness; happiness depends upon our surroundings and circumstances, joy has nothing to do with these but rather is the result of centering our affections upon him.

Second: He desires that we should be one with him. By this I am sure he means that we should be one in our thought of sin, one in our desire for holiness, one in our efforts to reach the unsaved, and one in our longing in all things to be pure and true and good.

Third: He desires to make us the object of his love. In this seventeenth chapter of John he tells us that the same love which he had for his son he has for those of us who are in his Son. Thank God for this. If he must open the windows of heaven to speak forth his love for that Son and then has the same for us, oh, what joy it is to be a Christian!

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