

Having Christ in Us

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of having Christ within us, leading to a life of joy, kindness, and Christ-like ministry.

Scripture: John 15:4, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:27

Topics: "Transformation through Christ", "Indwelling of Christ"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound significance of having Christ dwell within believers, illustrating that true Christian life is characterized by the indwelling of Christ, which transforms and empowers individuals from within. He contrasts the superficial experience of having Christ outside with the deep, transformative joy that comes from Christ living in our hearts, especially during trials and sorrows. Miller explains that this inner presence of Christ not only brings peace and joy but also compels believers to reflect His character in their actions and relationships with others. The sermon highlights that true Christian ministry arises from this inner transformation, urging believers to actively express Christ's love and kindness in their daily lives. Ultimately, Miller calls for a genuine manifestation of Christ's spirit in believers, which leads to a life of service and compassion towards others.

Transcript

The Scriptures make a great deal of Christians having Christ in them. Christ himself speaks of abiding in his people, and of his life as flowing through them as the life of the vine flows through its branches. The figure of the body is used, believers being members of Christ's body, and deriving all their life from him. The idea of a building or temple with the divine Spirit as indwelling guest, is also employed to represent the Christian's relation to his Lord. Then, the apostle Paul says without figure, "Christ lives in me," and speaks of being "filled with the Spirit," "filled with all the fullness of God," as a possible and most desirable attainment of Christian experience.

From the many forms in which this truth is represented in the Scriptures, it is evident that the ideal Christian life is one that is thoroughly pervaded, saturated, so to speak, with the life and spirit of Christ. Far more certainly is implied than mere divine influence over us or upon us from without, such influence as a friend exerts over a friend, a teacher over a pupil, or even a mother over a child. To become a Christian, is to have a new spiritual life enter the soul, as when a seed with its living germ is planted in the dead soil. To grow as a Christian is to have this new life increase in strength and energy, making daily conquests over the old nature, extending itself, and expelling the evil, by the force of its own good, and ultimately

bringing the affections, feelings, desires, and all the activities, even the thoughts of the heart, into subjection to Christ.

There is a great difference between having Christ outside--and having him in us. If he is only outside, we may listen for his words, and try to obey his voice, following where he leads; and we may gaze upon his loveliness, and seek to copy it in our lives; but our following and obeying will be under the impulse of duty only, with no inward constraint; and our striving after the divine likeness will be like the carving of a figure in cold marble--rather than the growing up of a life from within by its own vital force and energy into fullness of power and beauty.

Only as we get Christ into our hearts, and let him dwell in us by his Spirit--shall we reach the true ideal of Christian life and experience. Then shall we do right, not by direction of written rule--but by the promptings of our regenerated nature--the indwelling Christ. Then shall our dull lives be transfigured by the light that shines in our hearts, and slowly changes all the earthliness to heavenliness. Then shall the features of the divine image come out little by little--as the new life within forces itself through the dull crust of the old nature, until at length the full beauty of Christ shines, where once only sin's marred visage was seen.

Christ within makes an inner joy, which all the darkness of earth's trials cannot quench. There are great diversities of experience in sorrow. Some when this world's lights are quenched, are left in utter gloom--like a house without lamp or candle or flickering firelight when the sun goes down. Others, in similar darkness, stand radiant in the deep shadows; they have bright light within themselves. Christ dwells in them, and the beams from his blessed life, turn night into day.

There is an ancient picture of the Christ-child in the stable, which illustrates this experience. The child lies upon the straw, the mother is bending over him, the wondering shepherds are near, and in the background are the cattle. It is night, and there is only one feeble lantern in the place; but from the infant child a radiance streams which lights up all the crude scene. So it is in sorrow-darkened hearts, when Christ truly dwells within. The light streaming from him who is the light of the world, in whom is no darkness, illumines all the gloom of grief. Indeed, when Christ dwells in the heart--sorrow is a blessing, because it reveals beauties and joys which could not have been seen in the earthly light. It is one of the blessings of night--that without it we could never see the stars; it is one of the blessings of trial--that without it we could never see the precious comforts of God.

When Christ is within us--sorrow is a time of revelation. It is like the cloud that crowned the summit of the holy mountain into which Moses climbed, and by which he was hidden so long from the eyes of the people. While folded in the clouds, he was looking upon God's face. Sorrow's cloud hides the world, and wraps the wondering one in thick darkness; but in the darkness, Christ himself unveils the splendor and glory of his face. There are many who never saw the beauty of Christ, and never knew him in the intimacy of a personal friendship, until they saw him, and learned to talk with him as friend with friend--in the hour of sorrow's darkness. When the lamps of earth went out, Christ's face appeared.

But Christ is not a friend for sorrow alone. We do not have to wait until trial comes to enjoy his love, and be blessed by his indwelling. His light shines in many places where the brightness of other lamps still beams. Yet, even there, it does not shine in vain. Christ within has a deep meaning to the joyous--as well as to the sad. All blessings are richer, all gladness is sweeter, all love is purer--because we have Christ. His peace in the heart, makes every earthly beauty lovelier. Indeed, all human gladness is but a vanishing picture, a passing illusion, unless the joy of the Lord is its spring and source.

What confidence it gives to us in our enjoyment of the transient and uncertain things of earth--to know that these are not our only possessions; that if we lose them, we shall still be rich and secure, because we shall still have Christ. All day the stars are in the sky. We cannot see them in the glare of the sunshine; but it is something, surely, to know that they are there, and that, when it grows dark, they will shine out. So, amid abounding human joy, it is a precious confidence to know that there are divine comforts veiled, invisible to our eyes in the sunshine about us--which will flash out the moment the earthly joy is darkened!

To the happiest heart that really makes room for Christ within, there is always the assurance of a world of spiritual blessings, hopes, and joys, lying concealed in the luster of human gladness, like stars in the noonday sky--but ready to pour their brightness upon us the moment the night falls with its shadows. Whether, therefore, the earthly light is bright or dark--Christ in the heart gives great blessedness and peace.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:27. "Christ lives in me." Galatians 2:20. Christ within us will be made manifest. If we have this divine indwelling, we will also have an ever-increasing measure in all our life--of the gentle and loving spirit of the Master. We should not claim to have Christ in us--if, in our conduct and speech, in our disposition and temper, and in our relations with our fellow-men, there is none of the mind and temper of Christ. If Christ truly is in us, He cannot long be hidden in our hearts, without manifestation. There will be a gradual transformation of our outer life into Christ-likeness. As He lived--we will live; as He ministered to others--we will minister; as He was holy--we will be holy; as He was patient, thoughtful, unselfish, gentle, and kind--so will we be.

Christ came to our world to pour divine kindness on weary, needy, perishing human lives. Christ truly in our hearts, would send us out on the same mission. And there is need everywhere for love's ministry. The world today needs nothing more than true Christ-likeness in those who bear Christ's name, and represent him. Christ went about doing good--he sought to put hope and cheer into all he met. If Christ is in us, we would strive to perpetuate this Christ-ministry of love in this world. Hearts are breaking with sorrow, men are bowing under burdens too heavy for them, duty is too large, the battles are too hard; it is our mission, if Christ is in us, to do for these weary, overwrought, defeated, and despairing ones--what Christ himself would do if he were standing where we stand. He wants us to represent him; and he fills us with his Spirit, that we may be able to scatter the blessings of helpfulness and gladness all about us.

Yet, one of the saddest things about life is, that, with so much power to help others by kindness of word and kindness of act--many of us pass through the world in silence or with folded hands. Silence has oftentimes a better ministry than speech. It were well very frequently if we did not speak--where now we speak with quick and glib tongue. There are words that pain and wound the heart. There is speech that is most cruel. There are tongues that had better been born dumb--than to have the gift of speech, and employ it as they do. "Speech is silver--silence is golden," says the old proverb; and there are homes and lives in which it were well if fewer words were uttered!

But there are also silences that are cruel. We walk beside our friends whose hearts are heavy, who are bearing burdens that well-near crush them, who are yearning for cheer and sympathy and love; we talk incessantly with them of other things--of business, of society, of books, of a thousand things--but never speak the sweet word for which they are hungering. If the mind of Christ is in us, it should prompt us to speak such words as Christ himself would speak if he were in our place.

Surely we should learn the lesson of gentle, thoughtful kindness to those we love, and to all we meet in life's busy ways! And we should show the kindness, too, while their tired feet walk in life's toilsome paths, and not wait to bring flowers for their coffins, or to speak words of cheer when their ears are closed, and their hearts are stilled, and it is too late to give them comfort and joy.

If we truly have Christ in our hearts, it will work out in transformed life and in Christly ministry; it will lead to the brightening of one little spot, at least, on this big earth. There are a few people whom God calls to do great things for him; but the best things most of us can do in this world is just to live out a real, simple, consecrated, Christian life in our allotted place. Thus, in our little measure, we shall repeat the life of Christ Himself, showing men some feeble reflection of His sweet and loving face, and doing in our poor way, a few of the beautiful things He would do, if He were here himself. Whittier tells us:

"The dear Lord's best interpreters

Are humble, human souls;

The gospel of a 'life'

Is more than books or scrolls."

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