

Christ Our Life

by Stephen Olford

Stephen Olford emphasizes the importance of Christ's indwelling life in believers, calling them to reflect His character and engage in His ministry.

Duration: 34:41

Scripture: Ephesians 4:12

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the story of the gospel as the most majestic story. He describes how God came down from heaven and lived a perfect life on earth, performing miracles and ultimately sacrificing himself on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. The preacher also highlights the importance of personal communication and the role of dedicated individuals in spreading the word of God. He emphasizes that while technology can aid in communication, it can never replace the power of preaching. The sermon concludes with a call to surrender one's life to Christ and allow His life to be lived through them.

Transcript

Amen. That's one of my favorite solos, especially when sung by my good brother Bill Hoyt, because it's come to mean one of the most significant prayers in my life. As I told my brethren in the ministry just an hour or so ago, I've come to see that there's only one thing that matters, really only one thing that matters, and that is that I become more and more and more like Jesus Christ.

There's so much unlikeness to Christ, so much imperfection and failure in my life, and the more I study theology and the more I read my Bible, the more I see that the supreme purpose for the for ordination of God, man's justification, sanctification, glorification, is that we might be conformed to the like of his Son, firstborn amongst many brethren. God is peopling heaven and will people heaven with men and women and boys and girls like Jesus Christ, and that's his purpose here upon earth. And it's when the corporate image of Jesus Christ is clearly seen that the impact we long for for revival will be felt across our land, just to be like Jesus.

And I say it without trying to be dramatic or sensational. I hope that when my boys look back upon my life and I've gone on and left them behind, they're not going to say daddy was a pastor, daddy used to preach in crusades or on television or radio. I hope they'll say we had a daddy who reminded us of Jesus.

That's all that matters, and if that isn't what they say about me, I shall have failed as a father. And if my people at Calvary Baptist Church don't say that of me, I shall have failed as a pastor. The only thing that matters about you, my brother, my sister, my young friend, whether God's going to plant you on a mission field or on a pulpit here or a minister's wife, is that you're like Jesus.

What the world needs is Jesus, just a glimpse of him. Let's forget all our highfalutin language and our conceited arrogance as to teaching God how to do his job in his way. God's method is a man, and God's man is Jesus.

Last night I was sharing with you a burden that was on my heart, and for those of you who weren't here, I spoke on the text, What Is Your Life? It is even as a vapor, which appeareth for a little while, then vanishes away. This morning I want to give the other side of the coin. I ask the question, What is your life? This morning I want to answer that question, Christ is your life.

Christ is your life. And my text is taken from Colossians 1, Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1, 27, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The Bible teaches that by nature we are dead in trespasses and in sins. In our unregenerate state we have no life. We lack that divine content which makes us living in Jesus Christ, alive in Christ.

And indeed Paul argues that in Ephesians 2 when he says, Though ye were dead in trespasses and in sins, now hath he quickened you. By grace are ye saved through faith in Christ. And we're made alive in Christ.

And the great theme of the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline writings, is this glorious little phrase, In Christ, in Christ, in Christ. Christ our life, as Colossians puts it beautifully. Christ who is our life.

Paul says in Galatians, I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. In Philipians he says, My life is Christ, for me living itself. The essence of living is Christ.

But we can never say, For me to live is Christ, until we can first of all say, Christ liveth in me. And this is the burden of this great chapter. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The genius of the Christian gospel is ultimately this, that Christianity is not my attempt to copy an historic Christ who lived 2,000 years ago. It can't be done. To be honest in this search is to be brought in utter bankruptcy, helplessness, and hopelessness at the foot of the cross, crying to God in repentance and laying hold of God in faith that we might be redeemed in Christ, regenerated in Christ by the Holy Ghost, that we might receive Christ who is our life.

Christianity is the indwelt life. God made man to be inhabited, and man is devoid of that divine content until he is inhabited. Man has a God-shaped blank that nothing else can fill save God himself.

God made man to be inhabited, and man isn't redeemed to his true humanity. He is not complete in Christ. As we were singing and as Colossians teaches, we're not complete in Christ until Christ truly indwells us.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. So Christ is your life. And I want to speak just in outline this morning, because it's a bigger subject than to deal with in one message, on four aspects of this great theme.

The life in Christ, Christ your life. First of all, what I'm going to call the majesty of the indwelling life of Christ, the majesty of it. Glance into that first chapter of Colossians and see again that wonderful opening

there in verse 15.

Christ who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible. Whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him.

And he is before all things and by him all things consist. This is the majesty of the creative life in Christ. He is the agent through whom God by the Holy Spirit brought the universe into existence as we saw last night.

All the rolling seas and the great constellations and everything that has been and is created and maintained is in him and through him. In that majestic prologue of John, this truth is brought out. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life.

And the life was the light of men. Scientists are being very specific now, confused in years past but specific now, pointing out that the universe must have an integrating point. Every atom must have an integrating point.

And since the atom is the universe in miniature, everything has an integrating point. Paul knew that long before they started saying that. He created all things and by him all things cohere, hold together, consist.

And were he to withdraw that integrating point, the entire universe would disintegrate. Every blade of grass that stands, every leaf that quivers in the wind, coheres, holds together, by the majesty of the creative life of Jesus Christ. The majesty of this indwelling life.

But not only the majesty of his creative life, the majesty of his redemptive life. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. And having made peace through the blood of his cross by him to reconcile all things unto himself, I say whether they be things in earth or things in heaven, you who were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his death.

And through that death and redemption we've come into an experience of this redemptive life. The story of the gospel is the most majestic story. Man aspires only God condescends.

God came through from heaven into the stream of human history, contracted as Wesley puts it to a span, was born of the Virgin Mary, demonstrated that life in all its beauty and nobility and holiness and sweetness along the dusty roads of Palestine. He touched the heads of little children, he broke bread and fed the poor, he raised the dead, he made the blind to see. And when he demonstrated the totality of the success of that life upon whom God had pronounced twice over, in whom I'm well pleased, in whom I'm well pleased, he died upon a cross, he shed his blood for the remission of sins, he poured out that life in redemption, caught it up again in resurrection, imparts it by the Holy Ghost that through that redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ I might know his life in me, hallelujah, for such a savior, the majesty of that indwelling life.

But this passage suggests also what I'm going to call the mystery of that indwelling life to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery amongst the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. You and your Greek classes will recognize that this is an interesting word, this word

mystery, and in its context, Paul used it in the sense in which we use the word secret. A mystery was that only revealed to initiates, initiates.

In the biblical, in New Testament sense, it's a secret only shared with those who are initiates, and only by the Holy Ghost. The man outside talks about a mystery, and I'm going to tell you Christianity is never at its best until we constitute a mystery to the man outside. Only when your life demands a supernatural explanation, a supernatural explanation, a mysterious explanation, are you living the real Christ life.

And although we talk very glibly about this wonderful word conversion, this wonderful word regeneration, this wonderful word transformation, the fact of the matter is that it is a mystery, it is a miracle, it is supernatural. And when we talk to the little child about receiving Jesus into your heart, or to the greater congregation, we're actually talking about the greatest miracle in all the universe outside of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's the miracle of his incoming.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Wonder of wonders that this old sinful Stephen Oldford standing here, cleansed by the precious blood, can be the very habitat, the sanctum, the indwelling place of the Son of God by the Holy Ghost. It's a mystery.

It's a mystery. Don't ask me to explain it. I can't.

The miracle of his own incoming is the miracle of that moment in your life, whether dramatic or businesslike, or whether a point you can't actually tabulate in terms of time. When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, by his Spirit, passed through into the center of your personality, we use a word to Christians to illustrate this gospel truth. Revelation 3.20, Jesus says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in. I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. The miracle of his incoming.

This is a challenge to the faculty of perception. Behold, behold, I stand at the door and knock. And until the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to see that the genius of Christianity, as I've said, is that the creative, redemptive Christ wants to actually come in and indwell you, you'll never ask him.

But the moment the majesty of that is revealed to you, the wonder that the transcendent God of the universe, the all-holy, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, invisible God, through Jesus Christ, by his Spirit, deigns to dwell in my heart. I'm telling you, when that bursts in upon my soul, and I see it, I can't resist. But it's not an appeal to the faculty of perception.

It's an appeal to the faculty of emotion. If any man hear my voice, hear my voice. And we don't hear just with the mind.

Don't believe it. We hear with the heart. It's the ears of the heart that Paul speaks about.

We understand it with the mind. We feel it with the heart. The faculty of perception, that's the mind.

The faculty of emotion, that's the heart. If any man hear my voice and open the door. If there's an appeal to the faculty of volition, open the door.

I will come in. And I wonder, before I go any further, if there's somebody here who's never asked him in, who's never asked him in. You may be educated and cultured.

You may be very religious. But if I were to put you on the spot and really ask you whether Jesus Christ is a bright, living reality, whether you can say without any question or dispute, Christ liveth in me this moment, you couldn't say it. May I just quote once again this to you, if that's so? Jesus says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him. Thank God when he's invited, he comes in. But this mystery of his indwelling life is not only the miracle of his incoming, it's the measure of his infilling.

Christ in you. And I mean Christ in you. And it's a very significant thing, young people, that if you study through Pauline's letters, you'll find that invariably the indwelling life of Christ is always associated with that title Christ.

Christ is the anointed one. Christ is the anointed prophet and priest and king. The anointed prophet, priest, and king.

And what Paul is saying is Christ in you. The measure of his indwelling is the measure in which I appreciate what he wants to do in me. I am to heed him as the indwelling prophet.

I am to hear him as the indwelling prophet, I should say. And heed him as the indwelling priest. And honor him as the indwelling king.

There is no message that matters save the message that comes through the prophetic word of Scripture, Christ the prophet. Through the priestly ministry of the word of God, manifested, of course, in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, his resurrection and his ascension ministry, he's the interceding priest now, mediating to me his risen life by the Holy Spirit. I'm saved by his life.

And also, of course, the authority of his kingship, his undisputed sway in my life. What is the measure of his indwelling? Is he prophet? Undisputed. Priest? Undisputed.

King? Undisputed in your life. This is the mystery of his indwelling. But that leads me quickly to say a word about the mastery of his indwelling.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Now, I know there's an eschatological aspect about this hope of glory here. But I believe there's a present application of this too.

A present application. And I would like you in your mind to link this hope of glory with 1 Peter 3, 15, where Peter, describing the persecution in which the Christian is sometimes caught, and referring to those dispersed Jews who are being persecuted and deprived of this world's goods, he says in the midst of it all, sanctify Christ as Lord. Read that in the revised version, please.

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. And be able always to give an answer to everyone that asketh you a reason for the hope that is within you, with meekness and fear. And I don't believe, I don't believe that we can ever know, we can ever know an answer to the world in which we live today.

We can ever know an answer in which, in the world in which we live today unless Christ is sanctified in our hearts as Lord. Until we know the mastery of that indwelling life, when Jesus Christ is undisputed Lord, Lord of every thought and action, Lord to send and Lord to stay, Lord in writing, speaking, giving, Lord of all things to obey, when he's Lord of all, for otherwise he's not Lord at all, as Hudson Taylor used to put it.

When he's Lord of all, then my friend, he's Christ, the hope of glory.

You've got an answer to a confused, hopeless world. And if you want a line of study to make this live to you, think of the mentions of the word hope throughout the New Testament. The mastery of a man who knows the certainty of hope, which hope we have as an anchor for the soul, both sure and steadfast.

Show me a fellow, show me a girl, show me a man in the business executive place of office, in the college, in the university, in the home, in the shop, in the factory, in the army. Show me a man or a woman, a fellow or a girl who has this certainty of hope, because Jesus is Lord, the mastery of the indwelling life. And I'll show you somebody to whom everybody will gravitate.

I'm not talking about cocky arrogance, because Peter has specifically said, give your answer with meekness and fear, with reverence and respect. But where that quiet poise of certainty, I'm telling you, you'll be just like a honeypot with bees all around today, in this confused, hopeless age in which we live. Not only the hope of certainty, but the hope of radiancy.

Paul speaks in Romans 12 of rejoicing in hope, rejoicing in hope. I think one of the last characteristics of the Holy Spirit, indeed the fruit of the Spirit in the Church of Jesus Christ today, is joy, joy. I'm not talking about that flippant, put-on, synthetic happiness that people often show off in a vaudeville religious show.

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about that unshakable joy, that radiance, that radiance that comes through the eyes, through the voice, through the handshake, through the personality, a joy which none can possibly misinterpret as being genuine. Genuine.

The radiancy of this hope. And not only that, the purity of this hope. John speaks of it in 1 John 3. Every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure, even as he is pure.

When this hope becomes a sanctifying influence in your life because Jesus is undisputed Lord, the mastery of his indwelling, I'm telling you, there is a purity of life, a purity of life in the midst of all the debauchery and sin and relativism of our age. And I don't care if Joseph Fletcher puts it, I don't care if he has to reinterpret the law. Thou shalt not kill ordinarily.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor ordinarily. Thou shalt not commit adultery ordinarily. Even in the midst of that, young fellows, young women, if you know a life of purity that's rooted in the absolutism of an indwelling Lord, whose law is word, and word is law, and law is life, and life is love, there's a purity that actually cuts through the relativism of our day.

And more than that, the certainty, the radiancy, the purity, the victory of this hope. When Paul describes the armor of the soldier, he talks about the helmet, the helmet, yes, which is the hope of salvation, the hope of salvation. And of course, he's thinking there of the final act of redemption in this mighty process of God, that final act of final victory, when man, redeemed in Jesus Christ, is rescued from the very presence of sin.

And why the helmet? Why? Because the Roman helmet, the Roman helmet had a certain mark on it, and as long as that helmet bobbed around in the battle and the man was still standing and the sun was glistening upon that helmet, there was every hope of salvation and deliverance. And all to walk through this life today of total defeat and frustration and aimlessness in victory, victory, victory in Jesus Christ. Not my victory, but his victory in me and through me.

This is the mastery of the indwelling life. Christ, my life. But this isn't selfish.

This is redemptive, this message. For the last thought I want to leave with you before I go, is the ministry of this indwelling life. We've looked at his majesty, mystery, mastery.

Look at his ministry. Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ, whereunto I also labor, striving, agonizing according to his working which worketh in me mightily. Young people, let me tell you that the whole concept of God in winning a world is through a man, through a man.

That man is Jesus. And God came in terms of a man. God still comes in terms of a man.

We are but the extension, if you please, of the incarnation in that sense. Christ in us, what for? What for? Just for mastery? No. For ministry.

First mastery and then ministry. In what sense? Well, in us he preaches the word. In us he reaches the world.

Look at it in our text. In us he preaches the word, whom we preach, warning every man, teaching every man, warning every man, teaching every man. Listen, we're living in a revolutionary age, and one of the great revolutionaries of our moment of history is the revolution of communication.

I could talk for hours on the revolution of communication. We are putting up satellites now that are going to be the very means of reaching every part of the world. And I was told the other day by Dr. Butterman, in a majestic statement and utterance to the National Convention of Religious Broadcasters, the hour is coming when somebody in the jungles of Central Africa only has to lift his left hand and look at a television screen on his wrist, the size of a watch, and see everything that's happening everywhere all over the world.

Communications. But in the final analysis, God is never going to substitute you. It is pleased God by the foolishness of preaching.

Not foolish preaching, but the foolishness of preaching. What man largely in the world disregards to bring to Christ, to bring to salvation, them that believe. And I'm telling you, he has no eyes here upon earth, but your eyes.

No lips, but your lips. No hands, but your hands. No feet, but your feet.

No heart, but your heart. To preach the truth. Christ is you whom we preach.

He is the final preacher. He is the authenticator of every word I say. And unless he endorses it, unless he authenticates it, I'm not preaching.

But in me, in me, he not only preaches the word, in you he not only preaches the word, but in me he reaches the world. And in you he reaches the world. And although the television is going to stretch to every corner of the earth, I'm going to tell you there'll still be people who'll never, never, never be touched unless you, in your small corner, touch them.

Your world. Your world. That's why the genius of New Testament evangelism is this.

Every member evangelism. Every member evangelism. I mean every member evangelism.

My task as a prophet, or an apostle, or a teacher, or an evangelist, or a preacher of the word of God according to Ephesians 4 is to minister to the saints, to minister to the saints, edify the saints that they in turn might serve. And the vision of the New Testament church is every member evangelism. Every member evangelism.

And that first century church reached the world, not through great crusades, not through television, not through radio, not through jet propelled planes, but I'll tell you how, through every member evangelism. The clergy were all clustered in Jerusalem, but the laymen were scattered abroad by persecution and they went everywhere preaching the word, gossiping the gospel, reaching every man, warning every man, teaching every man that they might perfect every man in Jesus Christ as the apostles had taught them, and particularly the great apostle Paul. Reaching the world.

Bill Hoyt has just come back from South America. A little while ago I just come back from Vietnam. And I'm going to tell you there is no device that man has ever thought of, whether it's the recording, tape, radio, or anything else, that would reach some of the people in South America.

That can only be met by a person. You. Some of the things that are happening on the front lines of Vietnam could not be done without some dedicated, yielded man in whom Jesus was preaching the word, in whom Jesus was reaching the world.

What is your life? What is your life? I'll tell you. Christ is your life. In all the majesty, mystery, mastery.

Then they went everywhere preaching the word, gossiping the gospel, reaching every man, warning every man, teaching every man that they might perfect every man in Jesus Christ as the apostles had taught them, and particularly the great apostle Paul. Reaching the world. Bill Hoyt has just come back from South America.

A little while ago I just come back from Vietnam. And I'm going to tell you there is no device that man has ever thought of, whether it's the recording, tape, radio, or anything else, that would reach some of the people in South America. That can only be met by a person.

You. Some of the things that are happening on the front lines of Vietnam could not be done without some dedicated, yielded man in whom Jesus was preaching the word, in whom Jesus was reaching the world. What is your life? What is your life? I'll tell you.

Christ is your life. In all the majesty, mystery, mastery, and ministry of his indwelling. The greatest prayer that's in my heart this morning is, oh, to be saved for myself, dear Lord.

Oh, to be lost in thee. Oh, that it might be no more I, but Christ that lives in me. Christ in my life.

Christ, your life. Let us pray. In a moment, Mr. Hoyt is going to sing those words.

And as he sings them, I'm going to ask you to make them your prayer. But even before that, seated here in this audience, without raising your hand, or standing to your feet, or coming forward, or demonstrating it in any other way than by your life as you leave this place, I want to ask, is Christ your life? Am I talking to some fevered, fettered, frustrated fellow girl, man or woman, pastor, missionary, and you've been trying to live the Christian life on your own terms? You haven't discovered that the dynamism, the dynamic, the

genius of the Christian life is just Jesus living his life in me, whereunto he works mightily by the power of his might, in order that it might happen moment by moment. Oh, look upon the majesty of it, the wonder of it, the sovereignty of it, the ministry of it, and just let God and let go.

Just let go, let God. Let Christ be who he is in you, your life. Oh, Savior, thou hast offered rest, then give it now to me, the rest of ceasing from myself to find my all in thee.

Let Christ be your life. Oh, to be saved for myself, dear Lord.

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