

The Measure of Christ (Colossians 1:27)

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of Christ within believers and the importance of recognizing Him as the source of all spiritual life and growth.

Scripture: Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 4:19, Ephesians 1:23, Ephesians 4:7, Philippians 3:20-21, Colossians 1:27, Colossians 3:10-11, 1 John 5:12

Topics: "Indwelling Christ", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the profound truth of 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' from Colossians 1:27, urging believers to recognize the significance of Christ's indwelling presence. He explains that true salvation, sanctification, and service are not mere concepts but are intrinsically linked to the person of Jesus Christ, who embodies these realities. The preacher highlights that spiritual growth is not achieved through effort but through a relationship with Christ, who transforms believers from within. Sparks calls for a focus on Christ as the central figure in all aspects of life, asserting that the measure of everything is determined by the manifestation of Christ. Ultimately, he encourages believers to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit, allowing Christ to be fully formed within them.

Transcript

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col.1:27). Read the whole verse carefully, fragment by fragment, to get the full import of its wonderful truth: "God was pleased to make known - what is the riches of the glory - of this mystery... which is, Christ in you." The riches of the glory, Christ in you!

"Know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" (2 Cor. 13:5). That interrogation of the Apostle is not without point, "Know ye not as to your own selves" - know ye not that Christ is in you? Do you not know this wonderful thing?

"My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). "Till Christ be formed in you"; this is a step on.

"Whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Marvellous words! No man would dare to say this; they are here by revelation of the Holy Spirit.

"Unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ... till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God... unto the measure of the stature of the

fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:7, 13; ARV). "The measure... of the fullness of Christ."

We want immediately to focus everything in and upon the Lord Jesus Christ for it is He who is in view. What we have before us is not teaching or truth; that is, to be possessed of more knowledge of truth; it is not service; but it is the Lord Himself.

The object of the Father from first to last is that the Son, the Lord Jesus, shall fill all things, and all things shall be filled with Christ. The value of everything in the eyes of God is according to the measure of the manifestation of Christ in it. It is from that standpoint God determines the importance of everything.

If we become focussed there, it will make a great difference, much will have to go because it is not manifesting the Lord Jesus. We must understand that the Father has set the Lord Jesus before His eyes, and the Father's eyes are full of only one object, that is the Beloved, His Son; and in the eyes of God the value of everything is determined by the measure in which His Son is manifested and glorified; that is His end and that is His object.

The All-Inclusiveness of Christ

Spiritual service, vision, vocation, glorification, have no existence apart from Christ; they are not things as things, and cannot be had except in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

To many salvation is as a thing. It is detached and regarded as something by itself; to be given by itself, for the good of those who receive it. Sanctification is wrapped up in the same way. So often we think of salvation and sanctification in relation to the persons in view, and so some thing for them, but it is Christ Himself who is salvation, He is sanctification, and He is within as these.

It is the same with service and vocation; these are often seen only in regard to the persons themselves. "Saved to serve" is only part of the truth and is a dangerous slogan, for the motive, so often, is the service itself and not the Lord. You may be so driven with the service that He is left out. We have detached the thing from the Person, and we find we are gripped and wrapped in the claims of "service"; it becomes the drive of service, and in the end it breaks us. And again, when service becomes hard and difficult we say we will give it up, we will resign, thus showing we have separated service from the Person, and have been occupied, day in and day out, with it, the work, and not with the Lord Himself.

And so with glorification; yes, this stirs us, we love to sing hymns about our glorification; but God means it to begin now and it must begin now. What is glorification? It is the full manifestation of Jesus Christ in us. God regards salvation, sanctification, vocation, service, glorification, as related to His Son, and of no value apart from Him; He is salvation, He is sanctification, etc.

Salvation and sanctification are often held up to people as things to be received for their good; the object being for them to benefit from something received; often it is salvation for salvation's sake. God has not saved a single soul for salvation's sake. God is not after salvation as an end in itself, but for the sake of the Saviour, for the glory of His Son. It is not salvation that is in view, but the Saviour. If people are rejoicing in salvation merely as something received for their own benefit, the full end will be hidden by the first step. Is not this the cause of arrest and hold up?

The worker has to be brought, by the way of seeing no deep fullness of result from his work, to the place where he cries out, "I can do nothing." So he comes to see the true nature of salvation, and that to save another soul is utterly beyond him, and is the work of God. So he comes to see God's object in salvation,

which is the glory of His Son. Salvation is not something, it is the mighty incoming of a Person; "He that hath the Son hath life"; (1 John 5:12). "To as many as received Him" (John 1:12).

This is also true in the matter of sanctification and service. Any service that is not fulfilled on the ground of the indwelling Christ as the Worker cannot effect the purpose of God, for only the Lord Jesus by His Spirit can do the work of God. Yes, you are called to be a servant in a service you can never fulfil! Service is the bringing of the Lord Jesus into view, and any service that does not do that is not the service of the Holy Spirit, but man's service which does not fulfil God's ends; it will be tested by the fire, and proved valueless.

Christianity is not a doctrine, not truth as truth, but the knowledge of a Person; it is knowing the Lord Jesus. You cannot be educated into being a Christian. Christianity is the knowledge within of a Person, knowing Him as dwelling within us.

The Universality Of Christ

God has singled out a Person, and gathered into that Person all the Divine perfections; everything is inseparably bound up with His Son; He has put all the fulness of eternity and of the universe into that Person, and bound up all the fulness in Him; not a fragment can be had apart from Him; that which is to characterize the new creation is in Him. The predestined end of God is a full presentation of the fulness of Christ - "The church, His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23).

Every corner of the universe will speak audibly of Jesus Christ; so that we shall not be able to go into a place, or touch a life, without finding an expression of the Lord Jesus.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" - this is heaven. You walk in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Think of the whole universe like that; a universal expression of His Son in fulness. That is the end God has in view, that Christ shall fill all things; that, looking into everything, it shall be found to be full of Christ. All is made for Him, and in the new creation all will speak of His presence and show forth some characteristic of Him. Oh! the joy, even now, when you touch a life and find immediately that life is full of the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus is the fulness of that life; what a benediction it is!

God has singled out a Person and set Him forth to be seen of all - the Man Christ Jesus.

The Universality Of The Church

You cannot go outside of A and Z in the realm of literature; you box the compass of language with A and Z; likewise Christ Jesus is First and Last of God's new creation, and all that is in between; you cannot get outside of that. We must never think of anything as outside of Christ; He Is Salvation; He Is Sanctification; He Is Redemption, Justification, Peace; Wisdom, Love, Heaven. "Know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you," this Christ - in you! Do you see the possibilities and the tremendous reach of this?

God will transform His universe, not from without, but from within. How? By putting Jesus Christ within the believer by His Holy Spirit; and thence there will be a two-fold activity - being conformed to Him by His Spirit, and He being formed in the believer; thus He is going to make His new creation.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1: 27). "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:11, 12).

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9).

"The Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20b, 21; ARV).

"Put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created Him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew... but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:10, 11; ARV).

"The church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22b, 23).

Growing Up Into Him

The Christian life is not by effort, and not by struggle; not merely by trying to put into practice certain maxims, or by trying to attain to a certain measure; but from beginning to end, and all together, it is a matter of knowing the Lord Jesus within. Of course this implies response to Him, and a continual yieldedness to His working by His Spirit within, and so co-operating with Him in His purpose of conformity to His image.

We have all grown since we were born. How did we grow? Not by sitting down and considering that we ought to increase our stature; not by determining to grow so much to-day, and a little more to-morrow; not by painful efforts to increase our dimensions, and so on; but we "just grewed!" - like Topsy. But while we "just grewed", we had to respond to the laws of growth. So in the spiritual realm, we have to recognize the laws of growth, and where these are not responded to, or are violated, there can be no growth, but arrest, weakness and loss.

Why is spiritual growth so slow in some and so gloriously quick in others? Because some kick and question, or argue with God; go round and round the point asking, Does it mean this? Must I do this? Is it necessary? Can I, may I do this? and so on. Yet these very people are loudest in saying they want only the will of God; but their very affirmation often shows a struggle is going on, and their growth is fraught with a good deal of friction.

Others in a beautiful sincerity and purity of spirit are immediately letting go to the Lord, so He is able to lead them on, without waste of time in controversy with the will of God; and there is no weakness through there not being an utter abandonment and whole-hearted obedience and surrender to that will. There is a passion for the Lord Himself, and for Him to have His full way at whatever cost.

It all depends on our appreciation of the Lord Jesus. When we get a true value of Him, and see all that He is for us to the Father, and as by faith we appropriate Him, we quietly grow - "Beholding... the Lord, are changed (transformed from within) into the same image, from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18).

The hindrance to growth is the regarding things as apart from the Person, the Lord Jesus. We would never walk round the Scripture, as we sometimes do, debating whether we would or would not, if we had a full appreciation of Him, if our passion was for Him to get the fullest glory possible; we should instantly yield, that Christ might get more glory.

Is not the difficulty often in our regarding aspects of the Christian life as something in themselves?

An adequate appreciation of the Lord Jesus gets rid of all the strain of spiritual growth. Christ is most glorified where Christ is most in the heart. Growth is bound up with the Beloved One; and growth is the outcome of being occupied with Him, giving the Lord Jesus His place in everything; He the first, and He

all, and in all. Conclusively it is a matter of the measure of Christ, we must see that everything is bound up with the Lord Jesus Himself.

Everything is a matter of knowing the Lord in our hearts, then the Lord has a clear way in us, and through us.

Get focussed on Him, and see that He Himself is everything.

The Gospel of God is that we are saved to be conformed to the image of His Son; to come to the fulness of the "measure of Christ," "unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

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