

Christ, the Believer's Sphere in Grace

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The sermon emphasizes the profound significance of being 'in Christ' as the believer's sphere of grace and identity, highlighting their new positions and possessions through this union.

Scripture: John 15:5, John 17:20, Romans 6:6-8, Galatians 5:18, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 6:10

Topics: "Union With Christ", "Eternal Grace"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer preaches about the profound truth of being 'in Christ' and the significance of this phrase in the New Testament grace teachings. This phrase, mentioned over 130 times, highlights the believer's position in Christ as a secret hidden in God's heart from ages past. The believer's identity, blessings, redemption, forgiveness, and inheritance are all found in Christ. The believer's relationship with Christ is deeper than any human relationship, as seen in the unity between believers and the Trinity. The believer is called to walk worthy of this calling, understanding the eternal glory of grace that has brought them into a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Transcript

There is probably no word of Scripture which more clearly defines the essential fact concerning the Christian than the phrase, "in Christ", and as the Christian is the most important fact of all creation, there has never been a word uttered which was so far-reaching in its implication, or which is fraught with greater meaning to humanity than the phrase, "in Christ".

This phrase, with its equivalents, "in Christ Jesus," "in Him," "in the Beloved," "by Him," "through Him," and "with Him," appears in the grace teachings of the New Testament no less than 130 times.

This most unusual emphasis upon one particular truth is arresting, and its import must not be slighted. Over against the emphasis which is given to this truth in the teachings of grace is the corresponding fact that there is no hint of a possible position in Christ in any teaching of the law or of the kingdom.

The believer's present position in Christ was not seen even in type or prophecy.

In the ages past it was a secret hid in the mind and heart of God. He who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath

made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery [sacred secret] of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

Who can comprehend the full scope of these eternal wonders?

Knowing the limitation of the human heart, at this point the apostle breaks forth into prayer "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding [heart] being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Having thus prayed that the Christian may know by divine illumination the hope of his calling and the riches of the glory of the inheritance which God now has in the saints, he continues to pray that they may also know by the same divine revelation, "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:2-23).

Growing out of this glorious relationship in Christ is a most natural responsibility to walk worthy of the calling; but the issues of a daily life and the character of the conduct which should enter into it, though important in their place, are lost and forgotten in the blaze of the eternal glory of that unchangeable grace which has brought the believer into the new creation in Christ Jesus.

To be in Christ is to be in the sphere of His own infinite person, power, and glory.

He surrounds,

He protects,

He separates from all else, and

He indwells the one in Him.

He also supplies in Himself all that a soul will ever need in time or eternity.

The union which is formed in Christ is deeper than any relationship the human mind has ever conceived.

In His priestly prayer, in which He had advanced onto resurrection ground, and where He contemplated the glory of His finished work as having been already accomplished (Cf. John 17:11), Christ spoke of three unities within the sphere of one relationship:

(1) the unity within the persons of the blessed Trinity,

(2) the unity between the persons of the Trinity and all believers, and

(3) the unity between the believers themselves, since they are in Him.

We read: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:20-23).

Who can fathom the depths of the revelation that the believer is related to Christ on the very plane of that oneness which exists between the Father and the Son?

Again, Christ likens the union which exists between Himself and the believer to the vital, organic relation that exists between the vine and its living branch. The branch is in the vine and the life of the vine is in the branch; but the branch possesses no independent life in itself. It cannot exist apart from the vine. The human child may outgrow dependence upon his parents and, in turn, support and sustain them; but the branch can never become independent of the vine. In like manner, the fruit and every manifestation of life in the branch is due to the ceaseless inflow of the vitality of the vine. The fruit is as much the fruit of the vine as it is the fruit of the branch (Cf. John 15:5; Rom. 7:4; Gal. 5:22-23).

Thus it is with the one who is in Christ.

Considering the same fact of unity, the apostle Paul likens Christ to the head and the believers to members in a body. This figure illustrates the same vital, dependent relationship.

The member in the body partakes of the merit and honor of the head, and the life and power of the head is imparted to the member. So perfect is this unity between the Head and the members of the body, that it is probable that Christ will never be seen in glory apart from His body, and the body will never be seen apart from Him (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:12).

From these illustrative Scriptures it will be observed that the unity between Christ and the believer is twofold: The believer is in Christ, and Christ is in the believer. The believer is in Christ as to positions, possessions, safekeeping, and association; and Christ is in the believer giving life, character, and dynamic for conduct.

It has already been pointed out that the Upper Room conversation recorded in John, chapters 13 to 16, presents the grace teachings of Christ, and is the germ of all the truth that is found in the Epistles, which, in turn, contain the revelation of the essential fact of the new creation and the resulting obligation as to daily life.

The doctrinal truth of the Epistles, which is the doctrinal truth of grace, is subject to the same twofold division--what the saved one is in Christ, and the character and power of the daily life that will be experienced when the victorious energy of the indwelling Christ is imparted.

At one point in the midst of the Upper Room Discourse, Christ compressed the whole doctrinal structure of grace into one brief phrase. This phrase is notable because it is the key to all the facts and relationships under grace, and because of its simplicity and brevity of language:

"Ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20).

These two aspects of the truth under grace will be considered separately.

(1) "Ye in me,"

(2) "I in you."

I. "Ye in Me"

Every child of God is vitally united to Christ.

He or she is placed in Christ by the baptism with the Spirit, which ministry of the Spirit is not only a part of salvation and therefore already accomplished for all who are saved, but it is distinctly said to be a ministry that is wrought for all who believe on Christ.

The Scriptures state:

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

This is the one passage in the Word of God which reveals the precise meaning and objective of the baptism with the Spirit.

Since its meaning is clear, there is no excuse for the prevalent errors connected with this truth. Being accomplished for "all," the baptism with the Spirit includes the one who has just been saved. Thus the time of its accomplishment is revealed.

It is, of necessity, synchronous with salvation itself, and therefore a part of it. Likewise, the same passage presents the divine objective which is accomplished by the Spirit's baptism.

It is "into one body," and that believers may be "made to drink into one Spirit."

There was a time when the individual was not in Christ, which is the present estate of all who are unsaved. There follows a time when the individual, being saved, is in Christ. This great change consists in the fact that one has been placed in that vital organic union with Christ by the baptism with the Spirit. By the Spirit one has been baptized into the very body of Christ, and this ministry of the Spirit, likewise, unites all who are saved into a unity of their own, for they are "made to drink into one Spirit."

There is no other work of God for the individual which seems to accomplish so much as the baptism with the Spirit, for by it the living union with Christ is established forever, and by virtue of that union the believer has entered the sphere of all heavenly positions and all eternal possessions which in grace are provided for one in Christ. To the Christian, Christ has become, in the divine reckoning, the sphere of his being, and this reckoning contemplates all that the Christian is and all that he does. Certain aspects of this truth, among many, are to be noted:

A. Christ Is the Sphere of the Believer's Positions

A sphere is that which surrounds an object on every side and may even penetrate that object. To be within a sphere is to partake of all that it is and all that it imparts. Thus the bird is in the air and the air is in the bird; the fish is in the water and the water is in the fish; the iron is in the fire and the fire is in the iron. Likewise, in the spiritual realm, Christ is the sphere of the believer's position. He encompasses, surrounds, encloses, and indwells the believer.

The believer is in Christ, and Christ is in the believer. Through the baptism with the Spirit, the Christian has become as much an organic part of Christ as the branch is a part of the vine, or the member is a part of the body.

Being thus conjoined to Christ, the Father sees the saved one only in Christ, or as a living part of His own Son, and loves him as He loves His Son (Eph. 1:6; John 17:23).

As an accompanying result of this vital union in Christ certain facts of relationship are created which are the believer's new positions in Christ, and are the consequence of the work of God in grace. To present fully all the new positions into which the Christian is brought in Christ would necessitate an analysis of all the great doctrinal portions of the Epistles.

By way of illustration, a brief selection from these positions is here presented.

Of the saved one it is said that he or she is:

Elect and called of God (1 Thess. 1:4; 5:24)

Redeemed by God through the blood of His Son (Col. 1:14)

Reconciled to God by the death of His Son (2 Cor. 5:19)

Sheltered eternally under the propitiation made in the blood of Christ (1 John 2:2)

Forgiven all trespasses, past, present, and future (Col. 2:13)

Condemned no more forever (Rom. 8:1)

Justified freely by His grace (Rom. 3:24)

Sanctified positionally, or set apart to God in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30)

Perfecting forever (Heb. 10:14)

Made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12)

Made accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6)

Made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21)

Made nigh to God in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:13)

A child and son of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:3)

Free from the law and dead to the law (Rom. 7:4, 6)

Delivered from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13)

Translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13)

Founded on the Rock Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 3:11)

God's gift to Christ (John 17:11-12,20; 10:29)

Circumcised in Christ (Col. 2:11)

A holy priest, chosen and peculiar (1 Pet. 2:5,9)

An object of divine love, grace, power, faithfulness, peace, consolation (Eph. 1:9; 2:4, 8; Heb. 13:5; Col. 3:15; 2 Thess. 2:16)

An object of Christ's intercession (Heb. 7:25)

His inheritance (Eph. 1:18)

Seated in the heavenly in Christ (Eph. 2:6)

A citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:20 R.V.)

Of the family and household of God (Eph. 2:19; 3:15)

Light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8)

In God, in Christ, and in the Spirit (1 Thess. 1:1; John 14:20; Rom. 8:9)

Possessed with the first fruits of the Spirit. Born (John 3:6), baptized (1 Cor. 12:13), indwelt (1 Cor. 6:19), and sealed (Eph. 4:30)

Glorified (Rom. 8:30)

Complete in Him (Col. 2:10)

Possessing every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3)

Of these and all other positions which are the present possession of the child of God through his vital union with Christ, it may be said that they are:

1. Invisible

The believer's positions, like all things related to the Spirit, are invisible; but as is true of spiritual things, they are more real and abiding than visible things. "For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18), and, "Whom having not seen, ye love" (1 Pet. 1:8. Cf. 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Heb. 11:27; 1 John 4:12). Even the present revelation by the Spirit is such as "eye hath not seen."

2. Unexperienced

The positions in Christ are never subject to human experience. They produce no sensation by which they may be identified. They are taken by faith, and joyous appreciation may come as a result of believing.

3. Apprehended by faith

Faith is the new and effectual faculty of the spiritual life. By it what is said in the Word of God is received as true. Such apprehension is, at best, only partial; but, notwithstanding the limitations of human knowledge, the positions are all perfect through Christ. Of this perfection, "the half has never been told."

4. Contested

Scripture presents the warfare of Satan as being waged in the sphere of "the heavenly places." There is abundant assurance that Satan's power can never spoil any aspect of the believer's actual positions in Christ, but Satan is able, except as the believer lays hold by faith of the power of God, to hinder the life of blessing which should flow out of that vital union with Christ.

5. Unmerited

Human merit, as in all the operations of grace, is excluded from the divine reckoning concerning these positions in Christ. They rest on the perfect merit of Christ. This is the very heart of the new standing before God. "In Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

6. Unchangeable

The standing and position of the child of God in Christ cannot be increased or decreased. It abides as He is, "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

7. Eternal

Finally, since these positions in Christ are related to, and depend only on Christ, they will endure as long as He endures: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost [without end] that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25).

These great positions and relationships in Christ are the result of the unrestrained outflow of the exceeding grace of God. They, therefore, do not appear in any teaching of the law of Moses or of the kingdom. These positions could not be gained by law works or by any human merit. Correspondingly, the manner of life which they propose cannot be lived according to the law in the energy of the flesh. The whole system of grace is both interrelated and complete within itself and cannot yield to the principle of the law at any point whatsoever.

B. Christ Is the Sphere of the Believer's Possessions

Again the enumeration must be partial:

1. A new standing in Christ

The new standing in Christ includes all the positions under grace, a portion of which have just been enumerated. These positions are "the riches of grace in Christ Jesus." The possession for a day even of one of these glories of grace would be well worth the trials and struggles of a lifetime. But in contrast to such a valuation, they are all gained, and all retained without struggle or trial; they are God's gift in grace. Such wealth cannot be comprehended by the unaided human mind.

The apostle prayed:

"The eyes of your understanding [heart] being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18);

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19);

"That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9).

There are no limits to be placed on the possibility of the illumination of the mind by the Spirit.

2. A new life in Christ

The Scriptures lay great emphasis upon the fact that the Christian possesses a new life from God. That life is imparted.

Christ said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The satanic counterfeit of this fundamental truth is the teaching that the new life consists in a new manner of life--a new standard or ideal. A new life imparted will naturally result in a new manner of life; but no manner of life, old or new, constitutes the means through which the imparted life is gained. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23); and, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:28).

Life from God is bestowed through a new birth, results in sonship, and secures the fatherhood of God.

3. The new presence and power of the Spirit

It is stated in Romans 5:5 that "the Spirit is given unto us." This is true of every person who is saved. The Spirit is the birthright in the new life. By Him alone can the character and service that belongs to the normal daily life of the Christian be realized. The Spirit is the All-Sufficient One. Every victory in the new life is gained by His strength, and every reward in glory will be won only as a result of His enabling power.

4. A new inheritance

The inheritance of the old creation in Adam was beyond description in its horror. It was to be "without Christ... having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). With Christ, God hath freely given us all things else (Rom. 8:32). The Christian's inheritance is nothing short of "all things," for he is an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

Peter writes: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3-4). The present blessings of the presence and power of the Spirit are but an "earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14. Cf. Acts 20:32; 26:18; Col. 1:12; Heb. 9:15).

This inheritance is a present possession which is sealed to the child of God under grace. In addition to the "all things" of Christ, it includes the "all things of the Father" (John 16:12-15), and these are to be revealed to the heart now by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-10); "The living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17); "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Appollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

5. A new enemy

To be in Christ is to experience the same enmity and opposition from Satan which he entertains toward Christ.

There is no enmity on Satan's part toward the unsaved. They form a part of his world system and are said to be under his power (Eph. 2:2; Col. 1:13; 1 John 5:19, R.V.; 2 Cor 4:3-4).

Satan's enmity is against God and against the people of God because God, by His divine nature, is in them, and they are in Christ. We read: "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:10-12, R.V.).

6. Access to God

A mediator is required between God and humanity since God is holy and humanity is unholy.

Job, who lived many centuries before Moses, gave utterance to his own sense of need of a mediator. Speaking of God he said: "For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:32-33).

There could be none to mediate between God and humanity unless God Himself should provide. This He did in the person of His Son. It is written: "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one" (Gal. 3:20).

A mediator must stand between two parties, for there is no occasion that he mediate for one. The teaching of the Scriptures is that God mediated His own case. That is to say, He stood between Himself and sinful humanity. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). God undertook through the death of His Son to protect the sacredness of His own holy standards and law which had been outraged by sinful humanity, and at the same time to secure the welfare of the offender. This is the work of a mediator.

Every demand of His holiness was met in Christ who, as Substitute, bore the judgment which God in righteousness must impose, and every interest of the sinner was provided for in the marvels of saving grace which were set free through the death and resurrection of Christ.

Christ has thus become the one and only ground of meeting between God and humanity.

"He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

The present widespread tendency to slight the fact of the holy demands of God against sin and to assume that the sinner is free to come to God on the basis of divine goodness and mercy, is not only a gross misrepresentation of the truth of God's Word, it is a satanic device to keep people from the salvation that is in Christ. The goodness and mercy of God can never be questioned, but that goodness and mercy has been exercised to the last degree of divine ability in the provision of a Mediator who is mighty to save.

Christ said: "I am the light," "I am the door," "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

There is, therefore, no approach to God for saint or sinner other than through the Mediator whom God has provided. All the types of the Old Testament which foreshadowed the work of Christ for humanity were equally clear on this great truth. As the shed blood of the animal sacrifices typified the efficacious blood of Christ, no individual of the Old Testament dispensation was permitted to come into the presence of God apart from the shedding and sprinkling of blood.

Christ is the Mediator of a new and better covenant. His shed blood is the antitype of all that was required in the sacrifices of the Old Testament; but in the present relation between God and humanity, the truth takes on an added reality and intensity which is beyond estimation. No one is now free to thrust himself into the presence of God simply because he wills to do so. Every door is closed but One. If God does not destroy the offender as He did in the old dispensation, it is not because the offense is any less worthy of death; it is because of His present attitude of long-suffering through grace. So much the more is humanity now obligated to respect the unchangeable truth that Christ is the only way to God. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

This mediation of the Son of God is seen in

- (a) access into the grace of God,
- (b) access into fellowship with God, and
- (c) access to God in prayer.

a) It is through Christ and Him alone that we have access into the grace of God. "By whom also we have access into this grace" (Rom. 5:2). This is as true for the saved as it is for the unsaved. The unsaved are saved only through the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Likewise, the saved are kept and stand only through Christ, and all their relationship to God is through Christ alone.

b) All communion and fellowship with God is on the basis alone of the person and work of Christ.

As the high priest of the old order went into the Holy of Holies once a year and communed with God, likewise, the priest of the new order--the child of God--is free to enter the presence of God and there to abide. But as the priest of the old order was received before God only because he or she was under the sprinkled blood, with the same divine discrimination, the priest of the new order is received only because he is under the precious blood of Christ.

God receives His children into fellowship on the sole basis of the efficacious blood of Christ, whether they understand this fact or not.

How vitally important it is, however, that they should understand and give continual heart-acknowledgment of all that Christ is to them!

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:19-22).

c) Christ is the only access to God in prayer. How misleading is the supposition that anyone can reach the ear of God who will simply speak to Him!

Apart from the Mediator Christ Jesus, there is no access to God in prayer and there can be no real prayer. The new basis of prayer in the present relationship to God is that prayer is to be made in the name of Christ. This is revealed by Christ in the Upper Room and is a part of His unfolding of the glories of grace.

"If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it"; "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 14:14; 16:23-24).

God receives all His children when they pray; but He receives them in Christ, and their prayer is effectual and prevailing only as it is in the name that is above every name, and on the ground of the blood that has been shed. How important, again, that the saved one understand this truth and that he come to God with full heart-acknowledgment of the Mediator--Christ!

The unsaved have no access to God in prayer.

"But," it is often asked, "how then can they be saved, if they cannot ask God to save them?" The answer is simple: No person is ever saved because he or she asks God to do it. He is saved through grace only when he believes. God is offering salvation to people. He does not need to be implored or moved in their behalf. He has been moved to give His Son to die. What more could He do? This marvelous gift of His grace is for all who will believe.

7. The Word of God

The written Word of God is one of the priceless possessions of the child of God in Christ.

It is the unfolding of all the revelation concerning the majesty and grace of the Father, the salvation and glory that is in the Son, and the power and blessing that is in the Spirit, the facts about heaven and earth, about sin and salvation, about angels and Satan, about life and death, and all that is future and all that is past. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16); "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).

The Word of God is as a title deed to all that the Christian possesses in Christ.

It is a covenant guaranty from God which is sealed in heaven. Assurance of the divine grace and blessing is never left to depend on the changeable feelings, or vain misunderstanding and imaginations of the human heart. "It is written." "These things have I written unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).

C. Christ Is the Sphere of the Believer's Safekeeping

As the First Adam transmitted what he was to those who were born after the flesh, so the Last Adam transmits what He is to those who are born after the Spirit.

The Christian's standing is in Christ, and there will be no fall in the Last Adam. He is as secure as God can make him secure, for the preservation of the believer is not conditioned by the thought which he has about the matter; it is according to the purpose of God.

As has been stated, all the eternal purposes of infinite grace are involved in the issue of the safekeeping of each one who is in Christ. In like manner, the security of the Christian is not merely the preservation of the possessions which together total his own inheritance; the believer is a part of the divine inheritance. God has an inheritance in the Christian (Eph. 1:18).

The real question becomes one, therefore, as to whether God is able to keep that which is His inheritance and whether He is disposed to keep. Against His power nothing can prevail, and He has paid the price, the blood of His own Son--to redeem this possession to Himself. Since He is free through the Cross to do so, and His love is unending, it is inconceivable that He will not keep the one He has saved. He has sealed His inheritance to the day of redemption

An illustration of the safekeeping which results from being in Christ is seen in the panoply which God has provided under which the believer may "stand" against the strategies and warfare of Satan. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:13-17).

The fact that Christ is the armor is a hidden beauty in this passage. He is the truth, our righteousness, our peace, our faith, our salvation, and the Word of God. Christ encompasses the believer and insulates him from the power of every foe.

D. Christ Is the Sphere of the Believer's Association

The believer's association extends to every relationship he sustains, and the character of these associations is molded in conformity to his position in Christ. Some of these relationships are:

1. With God the Father

Through the death of Christ, and through the regenerating work of the Spirit, an individual who believes is made a son of God by receiving the divine nature and is made to stand before God forgiven, righteous, and justified forever. He has entered the family and household of God, and the Father's tender care, which is all that infinite grace can provide, is over him.

The unsaved do not know God; He is not in all their thoughts. They may know about God, but this is far short of knowing God. Such knowledge is only gained by the personal introduction to the Father by the Son: "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). And to know the Father signifies the possession of eternal life: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

God was not usually known as Father under the past dispensation. He was honored and trusted as a "covenant-keeping God." The psalmist wrote: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13).

2. With Christ the Son

The extent of this relationship is limitless since it contains all that enters into the new sphere in Christ. It includes all that He is as Savior and Lord; all that He is in partnership with the believer in service, in

suffering, and in betrothal; and all that He is in the Christian's fellowship, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Christ is the object of ceaseless devotion and praise.

3. With the Spirit of God

At this point, association is nothing less than identification itself in all matters of life, character, and service, for the believer is appointed to live only by the power of the indwelling Spirit. The association with the Spirit is immediate and intimate because He indwells every believer. The presence of the Spirit is not disclosed through human emotions and feelings; it is rather detected by the things which He does.

4. With Satan and his emissaries

As has been stated, the believer is brought, through his new position in Christ, into a sphere wherein Satan's enmity is directed against him as it is directed against God. "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12, R.V.).

The victory is provided only through the indwelling Spirit: "Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

5. With the angels

The angels are messengers or ministering spirits "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14).

While their care attends the child of God, it has not pleased God to give the Christian fellowship with them. Their ministry as messengers is revealed throughout the Word of God.

6. With the world

The Christian is not of this world.

He has been translated into the kingdom of Christ.

He is a citizen of heaven, and his only relation to this world is that of an ambassador and witness.

He is in the Enemy's land, for Satan is "the god of this world."

The kingdoms of this world are given to Satan under the permission and purpose of God (Luke 4:6). The Christian is related to the world and all that is in the world only as he is related to it through Christ.

This relationship is threefold:

(a) to the world system,

(b) to human governments,

(c) to the unsaved individual.

a) The world system is the whole sphere of human life with its institutions, ideals, and projects.

Concerning this world system the believer is thus warned:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17);

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11);

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:5-6).

b) According to the Bible, human governments are under the direct authority of the Gentiles.

The present is the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). Human government is of God only to the extent of His permissive will and the realization of His purpose, but the citizen of heaven is instructed to be in subjection to governments:

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation [judgment]. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:1-7);

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:13-17).

c) To the unsaved individual the consistent attitude of the Christian is the same as that of his Lord who died for lost men and women. As He is, so are we, and therefore we are to manifest His spirit in this world.

Of his own attitude toward lost people, the apostle Paul wrote: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead [all died in the Substitute]... Therefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Cor. 5:14-16).

Having beheld Christ as God's Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, and as the One who died for all, and in whose death all have partaken, the apostle says: "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh."

The usual distinctions among people of Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, bond and free, are submerged in the overwhelming estimation of that which is accomplished for all through the death of Christ. The apostle now recognizes them only as people for whom Christ has died. This conception of the estate of the

unsaved is the normal one for all Christians, and it leads on to a reasonable service for Christ in soulwinning.

7. With the whole body of Christ

The Epistles of the New Testament disclose the basis for a fellowship and kinship within the company of the redeemed which exists in no other association of people in this world, and this union calls for a corresponding manner of conduct from the Christian toward fellow believers.

This relationship is sevenfold:

a) Love is revealed as the underlying principle of a Christian's relation to other Christians in general. It is embodied in the first commandment of Christ in the grace teachings of the Upper Room: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

This same truth is set forth in many passages.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14);

"Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26);

"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Eph. 5:2); "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God"; "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:7, 11);

"Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1);

"Let love be without dissimulation."

This is one of the great passages on Christian love and care one for another. The whole context should be read: Romans 12:9-16.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:12-13).

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:8-9);

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Pet. 4:8-9).

The Christian is called upon to recognize the vital union into which he or she has been brought by the baptism with the spirit: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

Special emphasis is given as well to Christian kindness:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32);

"That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified..."

"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:6, 9);

"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (1 Thess. 5:11);
"Speak not evil one of another, brethren" (Jas. 4:11).

Christians are to submit one to another and in honor prefer one another:

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21);

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:3-4);

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5).

The Christian's gifts are to be especially directed to the need of the children of God:

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10);

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

Prayer is to be offered for all saints:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:18);

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (Jas. 5:16).

b) On this important question of a Christian's relation to those who are in authority in the assembly of believers, the Word of God is explicit and comment is unnecessary:

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb. 13:7);

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17);

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (

1 Thess. 5:12-13).

To this body of truth should be added all of the pastoral Epistles.

c) The grace teaching on the relation of Christian husbands and wives is also explicit:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:25,22. Cf. Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

d) The grace teaching on the relation of Christian parents and children is explicit.

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord";

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (Eph. 6:4, 1. Cf. Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21).

From this body of revelation it will be seen that the children of Christian parents are to be governed as in the Lord. One of the conditions which will characterize the last days of this age will be the disobedience of children (2 Tim. 3:2).

e) The relation of Christian masters and servants is clear.

"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God....

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven" (Col. 3:22; 4:1. Cf. Eph. 6:5-9).

f) A Christian has an obligation to an erring brother.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1);

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thess. 5:14);

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us....

For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies... yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:6, 11-15).

A sharp distinction must be drawn at this point between a disorderly brother who is a busybody, shirking his honest toil, and careless in matters of Christian conduct on the one hand, and a sincere believer who may disagree with another on a matter of interpretation on the other hand. Endless confusion and disgraceful contention has followed the exercise of unwarranted freedom among sincere believers in separating from each other over minor questions of doctrine.

Should one fail to hold the true doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11), that one can have no rightful place in a Christian communion; but people have divided over secondary issues and have gone so far as to exclude earnest Christians from their fellowship with whom perchance they disagree in a minor question of doctrine.

Such separation is unscriptural, a violation of the priceless unity of the Spirit, and foreign to the order of grace. There is Scripture teaching concerning Christian discipline, but it does not necessarily impose a penalty of separation.

The brother who may have been overtaken in a fault is to be restored, and only by one who is himself spiritual. This he must do in the spirit of meekness considering his own utter weakness apart from the enabling power of God. No other may undertake this important service. If the erring brother proves to be persistent in his fault, it is required that he be debarred from the fellowship of believers until he has seen the error of his way.

Equally sincere brethren must not break fellowship, however, over minor issues.

Of those who are thus disposed, the apostle writes: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18).

g) A Christian has obligations to a weak brother.

The tender conscience of a weak brother must be considered.

This important principle applies to very many questions of the day.

In the apostles' time there was a grave question concerning the eating of meat which had been offered to idols and was afterwards placed in the public market for sale. There were those who had only recently been saved and rescued from the grip of the power of idol worship. There were others who were so deeply prejudiced by their former experiences with idols that, while saved and free, they were not willing even to touch anything connected with an idol.

It would be natural to say that the first class should know better than to be drawn back to idols, and that the second class should be made to give up their prejudice, but this is not according to the "law of love."

It is written: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Rom. 14:1-4).

From this passage it is clear that instruction is also given to the weaker brother to the intent that he shall not "judge" the Christian who, through years of Christian training and deeper understanding of the liberty in grace, is free to do what he himself in his limitations may not be able to do. There is hardly a more important exhortation for Christians today than this.

The cure is clearly revealed: God reserves the right to correct and direct the life of His own child.

Much hurtful criticism might be avoided if Christians would only believe this and trust Him to do with His own child what He purposes to do. God is the master before whom alone the servant stands or falls.

The passage continues: But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.... For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense [to his own convictions]. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned [condemned] if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:15-23). Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Due regard for the conscience and liberty of others is twofold: On the one hand, let the strong be charitable toward the weak. On the other hand, let the weak desist from judgment of the strong. The result will be a mutual fellowship and an exercise of all the liberties of grace.

II. "I in You"

The believer's new sphere consists not only in his place in Christ with its positions, possessions, safekeeping, and associations; it consists as well, in the fact that Christ is in the believer.

The Scriptures teach that God the Father (Eph. 4:6), that God the Son (Col. 1:27), and that God the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19) indwell every child of God.

No doubt the mystery of the unity of the Godhead is involved in this revelation; for it is also said that the Christian has partaken of the divine nature, and this divine nature is not identified as being one only of the three persons of the Trinity. The divine nature is evidently the indwelling presence of God--Father, Son, and Spirit.

There is a body of truth which teaches that God, in the unity of the three persons, dwells in the heart of the child of God. Likewise there is an even greater body of Scripture which emphasizes the indwelling of the believer by the individual persons of the Godhead. When the full unity of God is in view, it is usually spoken of as the indwelling Christ. As indwelling the Christian, the Spirit of God is once spoken of as "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9).

It may be concluded, therefore, that the phrase "I in you" is to be received as referring to the whole divine person--Father, Son, and Spirit.

The result of this indwelling of Christ is threefold:

- (1) A new divine life,
- (2) A new enabling power, and
- (3) A new "hope of glory."

A. A New Divine Life

The branch is in the vine and the vine by its life and vitality is in the branch. Thus the believer is in Christ and Christ is in the believer. The new imparted life is Christ, and is therefore eternal because He is

eternal. When only the question of an unbroken manifestation of that new life is under consideration, it is said to depend on abiding in Christ as the sole condition. The believer's place, or position, in Christ is neither attained, nor maintained, through abiding in Him. That position is instantly wrought by the power of God through grace for every one who believes. Nor is the possession of the divine life, which is the indwelling Christ, secured by abiding in Him; it is the "gift of God."

However, the normal manifestation of that life does depend on abiding in Him.

Abiding is simply the right adjustment between the Christian and his Lord. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

How important, then, it is that the Christian should understand precisely what is included and required in the commandments of Christ!

As pointed out before, the commandments of Christ are only His grace teachings, this term being not once employed by Christ before He began in the Upper Room to unfold the believer's life and walk in grace.

Eternal, divine life, therefore, is Christ indwelling the believer by His Spirit, and that life is the present possession of all who believe. The victories, joys, and fruits of that life depend upon abiding in Him, which is accomplished only by doing His will.

B. A New Enabling Power

The theme of the enabling power of God, being one of the most vital in the divine plan of grace, though before mentioned, should at this point be reviewed in its twofold aspect:

1. Christian character

Under the law relationship between God and people, character was the product of the energy and struggle of the flesh.

This, too, is the conception of human character which is held by the world, and, alas, through false teaching, it is the only one in the minds of many Christians. It is commonly preached that the sum total of an individual's acts will determine his habits, the sum total of his habits will determine his character, and the sum total of his character will determine his destiny. Whatever may have been true under the law, this doctrine is foreign to grace.

Destiny is not now determined by self-promoted character; it depends only on the faith which receives the saving grace of God. Heaven's glory will not be a display of human character; it is to be the unveiling of the riches of grace in Christ Jesus. Nor is Christian character a product of the flesh; it is "the fruit of the Spirit." The divine record of all that enter into true Christian character is stated thus: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance [self-control]," (Gal. 5:22-23).

These graces are elements of divine character which are never found unless divinely wrought. They are "the fruit of the Spirit." They are never gained by struggle, long or short; they are the immediate experience of every believer who comes into right adjustment with the Spirit. Therefore the way to a victorious life is not by self-development; it is through a "walk in the Spirit."

In the context in which the above passage appears, the apostle also states: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit [by means of the Spirit], and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (5:16).

The believer's responsibility is not the walk; it is rather that of yieldedness to the Spirit who promotes the walk.

When thus yielded, the result is instant and perfect: "Ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." So long as the walk is continued by the power of the Spirit, this spiritual life will be experienced. Should the adjustment to the Spirit cease, the walk must cease, and the flesh will again be manifested.

The New Testament term, "the flesh," indicates the sum total of what the natural human is--body, soul and spirit.

Within this whole, and as a part of it, is the fallen Adamic nature--sin.

Three means for the control of the sin nature are taught--two of which are the product of human reason and one the revealed provision of God:

a) Is the sin nature controlled by eradication?

Though this theory is advanced by certain schools of thought, it lacks the support of even one passage of Scripture. It is accepted because it seems reasonable, the thought being that if the source of sin is checked, would not the flow cease? Doubtless it would; but God has revealed no such program.

If eradication of the sin nature were accomplished, there would be no physical death, for physical death is the result of that nature (Rom. 5:12-21); parents who had experienced eradication would, of necessity, generate unfallen children.

But if eradication were secured, there would still be the conflict with the world, the flesh (apart from the sin nature), and the Devil; eradication of these is obviously unscriptural and is not included in the theory itself.

As God purposes to deal with the world, the flesh, and the Devil, thus He proposes to deal with the sin nature which is a part of the flesh. The full deliverance is by the overcoming power of the Spirit through the work of Christ on the cross.

The work of Christ on the cross secured the judgment of the old nature (Rom. 6:6); but it also secured the judgment of the world (Gal. 6:14), the flesh (Gal. 5:24), and the Devil (Col. 2:15).

The work of Christ is a divine judgment which has made it righteously possible for God to control the world, the flesh, and the Devil as they may affect the believer. Within the flesh, and as a part of it, is the sin nature. This nature is no more subject to eradication than is the world, the flesh, or the Devil.

The divine plan for the deliverance of the believer from the power of the sin nature is exactly the same as for the deliverance from the other opposing principles.

It is by the overcoming power of the Spirit made possible through the death of Christ.

This provision brings the child of God into moment-by-moment dependence upon his Lord. It drives him to the most intimate relationship with God.

Eradication, if it were true, would tend to wean the Christian from Christ in the measure in which it would fit him to get on alone. In the midst of the description of the divine ideal for a spiritual walk, it is said that the victory is due to the fact that the Spirit is lusting against the flesh, therefore when walking by means of the Spirit, "ye cannot do the things that ye otherwise would" (Gal. 5:17).

It is evident from this passage wherein the highest ideal of life is presented that the flesh is contemplated as being present, but it is under the control of the Spirit.

b) Is the sin nature controlled by rules?

It is proposed by others that the flesh shall be controlled by rules and regulations.

The seeming sanction of the Scriptures for this theory is gained by turning to the law, for under the law the flesh was to be governed by rules. The law-history of fifteen hundred years, however, is sufficient evidence of the failure of this method; yet it seems impossible for many to be delivered from the belief that a spiritual life may be gained by the keeping of rules. It is supposed that the divine ideal has been realized when people have been induced to attempt to regulate their lives by rules.

c) Is the sin nature controlled by the Spirit?

According to the Scriptures, such is the divine plan for the control of the flesh in the believer's life under grace.

It provides all that God desires or requires in any life, and brings the saved one into the closest fellowship with God, and into constant dependence upon the Spirit. It is the only victory possible for the Christian to experience, for it only is according to the purpose and Word of God.

If the quality of the believer's daily life is to be improved, what steps are to be taken?

Will carnality and coldness of heart be corrected by enforcing rules of conduct? When a carnal Christian does not wish to do the will of God, will God be satisfied if that Christian merely complies externally with the law of God? The answer is obvious. God looks on the heart.

In the provisions of grace, God proposes to change the desires of the heart and to empower to the full realization of these God-wrought desires.

The law could work no change in the heart, nor can the attempt to keep rules, but the Spirit can change the desires.

The law could give no enabling power, but the Spirit can. Therefore it is said: "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18); and against the "fruit of the Spirit... there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23); again, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

2. Christian conduct

The manner of the Christian's life, including every activity of the child of God, is described in the Scriptures by the words walk and conversation.

This aspect of the truth is to be distinguished from the believer's character. Walk refers to that which is outward; while character--"the fruit of the Spirit"--is inward.

In point of importance, character is supreme, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Under grace, God proposes by the Spirit first to create the heavenly motives and desires, and then, by the same Spirit, to empower the life to the full realization of those desires.

While these heavenly desires are said to be "the fruit of the Spirit," the resulting activities are said to be the exercise of a "gift" through the Spirit. A "gift," like the "fruit" of the Spirit, is never a product of the flesh nor any ability within the flesh. The Spirit may choose to use the native ability, but a "gift" is the direct undertaking of the Spirit in and through the human instrument.

It is the Spirit doing a work and using the one in whom He dwells to do it.

Thus both Christian character and Christian conduct are dependent on the enabling ministration of the Spirit. This divine provision is not merely for crisis moments in the experience of the Christian; it is for every moment, whether it be one of activity or one of rest.

The divine standards for the believer's character and conduct are superhuman. This is reasonable since he or she is a citizen of heaven. The superhuman manner of life becoming to a heavenly citizen is to be lived by the enabling, supernatural power of the Spirit. The Spirit has taken up His abode in the heart in order that He may undertake this for the child of God, and if He does not accomplish His work, it is because He is hindered by the carnality of an unyielded life.

The problem of improvement in the conduct of a Christian is never solved by the application of laws, nor by exhorting and stimulating the flesh; it is only solved by adjustment to the Spirit.

When Spirit-filled, the child of God is both moved to glorify God in every moment of life, and is enabled to realize that heavenly ideal.

There is much said in the Scriptures about the Christian life being a "warfare," a "fight," and a "race."

The Christian is to be watchful, steadfast, and immovable. He is not exhorted to attempt to do what the Spirit alone can do; he is rather to maintain the attitude of cooperation with, and yieldedness to, and

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