

'A Man in Christ'

by Samuel Logan Brengle

Samuel Logan Brengle's sermon emphasizes the profound significance of being 'in Christ' and the transformative experiences that come from this relationship.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:11, Zephaniah 3:17, John 15:5, Romans 8:19, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:27, 1 John 4:13

Topics: "Transformation through Christ", "Being in Christ"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the profound significance of being 'in Christ,' illustrating how this relationship serves as a refuge, source of strength, and transformative experience for believers. He reflects on Paul's assurance of being in Christ and encourages listeners to examine their own lives and relationships with Christ, highlighting the importance of both abiding and transitory experiences of divine fellowship. Brengle urges Christians to live in constant communion with Christ, which not only enriches their spiritual lives but also impacts those around them positively. He concludes by affirming that true transformation occurs when individuals embody the essence of Christ, becoming vessels of His love and peace in a troubled world.

Transcript

I knew a man in Christ,' wrote Paul. Think of one writing: I knew a man in Bonaparte, in Buddha, in Caesar,' and we shall see at once how striking, how startling is this expression. We should be not only startled but shocked to hear this of any but Christ Jesus. But the Christian consciousness is not offended by hearing of 'a man in Christ.' It recognizes Him as the Home of the soul, its hiding-place and shelter from the storm, its school, its fortress and defense from every foe. He is not simply the Babe of Bethlehem, the Carpenter of Nazareth, the first of the religious teachers of Palestine, and victim of Jewish bigotry and Roman power. He is the Prince of Peace, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, in whose bosom we nestle, and in whose favor we find peace and comfort and Salvation.

Do you know any man or woman in Christ, my brother, my sister? How many Soldiers in your Corps do you believe to be in Christ? -- to live in Him, to walk in the unbroken fellowship that being 'in Christ' must imply? Do you know twenty? Ten?

But let us not judge others. Paul was not doing so. He was very generous in his judgments of his brethren. He addresses his letters as follows: Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.' ' Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to

all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi.' ' Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God... to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse.'

He reckoned his brethren to be in Christ, but this man whom he 'knew in Christ,' was not one of them, but himself. He was the man. There was no doubt about his being in Christ. He wrote with complete assurance. Can you speak with such assurance, my Comrade? Do you know yourself to be in Christ? Or ever to have been in Christ? What a profound fellowship and union!

But listen to Paul further: 'I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth); such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); how he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful (or possible) for a man to utter.'

Did you ever have a moment, or an hour, in which you were lost in fellowship with the Lord, having no thought of time or space, in which experiences were wrought in you, emotions swept through you, purity and love and power and comfort and assurance were imparted to you, that you have never been able fully to explain or express in words, or which, possibly, you have felt to be too sacred to try to tell or describe?

Such was Paul's experience. He was the man to whom the words make reference.

And many people who are in Christ, possibly most or all who are in Him, have had some such moment -- just a moment, or an hour, long or short it may have been, but indescribably sweet, precious above gold or silver, and memorable above any and all other experiences of life.

Oh, how invaluable is such an experience to a soul, especially in a time of fierce temptation! It sweeps away for ever the intellectual and moral and spiritual fogs and uncertainties that becloud the mind and heart. It fixes a man's theology. It settles for him the fact that he himself is a living soul, morally and spiritually responsible to God. He feels the breath of eternity in him.

Wrapt in that wondrous fellowship he knows there is a Heaven; and to lose God, he knows, would be Hell. Henceforth to him, Heaven and Hell are realities as assured as light and darkness, as truth and falsehood, as right and wrong. This experience establishes the Godhead of Christ. He knows that 'Jesus is Lord,' not by what he has learned from his teacher, from books and creeds, but 'by revelation,' 'by the Holy Ghost.'

If in hours of depression and temptation, the enemy of his soul should suggest a doubt as to these great truths, he can instantly rout his foe by recalling the intimate revelations of that sacred experience which it is not possible to utter.

There are two experiences mentioned by Paul in this portion of Scripture. One is abiding -- the blessed, but common everyday experience that is new every morning and fresh every evening; that the dust and toil of the day, nor the stillness and slumber of the night, do not break nor disturb; it is the very life of the Christian. The other is a transitory experience; but for a moment, comparatively.

'I knew a man in Christ,' that is the abiding experience. We are to live in Christ. Daily, hourly, momentarily we are to choose Him as our Master, walk with Him, look unto Him, trust Him: obey Him, draw from Him our strength, wisdom, courage, purity, every gift and grace needed for our soul's life. The supply of all our need is in Him. Our sap, our life, our leaf and our fruit are from Him.

Cut off from Him we wither, we die, but in Him we flourish, we bring forth abundant fruit, we have life for evermore. Hallelujah!

'I knew such a one,' writes Paul, 'caught up to the third heaven -- into Paradise -- and heard unspeakable words:' that is the transitory experience. It passes in an hour and may, possibly, never in this life be repeated, any more than was the 'burning bush ' experience of Moses repeated, or the 'still small voice ' experience of Elijah, or the Jabbok experience of Jacob, or the transfiguration experience of Jesus.

Those experiences were brief, but their effects, their revelations were for eternity. They were not abiding experiences, but windows opened through which earth glimpsed Heaven. The memory of that vision was imperishable, though the vision passed. The veil was withdrawn, and for one awful, rapturous moment the eyes of the soul saw the face of God, and the spirit of a man had unutterable fellowship with its Father.

The man who has had such an experience will be changed, will be different from his former self, and different from all other men who have had no such experience.

Henceforth for him 'to live is Christ,' and the great values of life are not material, financial, social, or political, but moral and spiritual.

One of the poets illustrates this from Lazarus raised to newness of life after four days of death:

Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,

Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing Heaven.

Discourse to him of prodigious armaments

Assembled to besiege his city now,

And of the passing of a mule with gourds

Tis one!

Should his child sicken unto death, why look

For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,

Or pretermission of the daily craft

While a word, gesture glance from that same child

At play or in the school or laid asleep,

(A false word, an angry gesture, evil glance that reveals moral wrong in the child,)

Will startle him to an agony of fear.

He feels that the child doth

Stretch forth blind hands and trifle with a match Over a mine of Greek fire. He holds on firmly to some thread of life

Which conscious of, he must not enter yet
The spiritual life around the earthly life:
The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here,
And oft the man's soul springs into his face
As if he saw again and heard again
His Sage that bade him 'Rise,' and he did rise.
He knows
God's secret while he holds the thread of life,
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will.
Seeing it, what it is and why it is.
It pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please.
How, beast!' said I, 'this stolid carelessness
Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
To stamp out like a spark thy little town,
Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?'
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds -- the very flowers of the field
As a wise workman recognized tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb;
Only impatient, let him do his best,

At ignorance and carelessness and sin

An indignation which is promptly curbed.

The march of armies, the physical destruction of cities and overthrow of empires, was nothing to this man whose eyes God had opened, compared to sin in his child. He was diligent in his daily business, he loved everybody and everything, and for the rest he trusted God. This is the mark of the man who has seen God, the man who has been caught up, if only for a brief moment, into that ineffable and paradisiacal fellowship.

Blessed be such a man, if he be not disobedient to the heavenly vision; if, like Mary, who treasured in her heart the things spoken of her Baby Jesus, so he treasures up the sacred revelation given to him in the moment of vision!

We cannot command such moments. They come to us, come unexpectedly, but they never come except to the man who is in Christ, the man who day by day lives for Christ, seeks His face, meditates on His ways and word, takes time to commune with Him, wrestles with Him in prayer, seeks to glorify Him by good words and works, and waits and longs for Him more than they who through tedious hours of weary nights wait and long for the morning.

Let no humble earnest Officer be discouraged because he does not constantly live in such rapturous fellowship. Paul did not remain in Paradise. It was a brief experience and was followed by that troublesome 'thorn in the flesh.' These glimpses of Heaven, these rapt moments of fellowship are given to confirm faith and fit the soul for the toil and plodding service of the love-slaves of Jesus, who fight and labor to help Him in His vast travail to save a world of sinners from sin, from the Devil's grip, and from Hell.

The common, everyday, abiding experience is a lowly, patient, loving life in Christ -- This may be ours unbrokenly, and it should be.

'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,' or creation, wrote Paul. He breathes the atmosphere of Heaven, while plodding the dusty roads of earth with his toiling fellow-men. He diffuses peace, he promotes joy, he kindles love, he quiets fear, he comforts mourners, he heals the broken heart.

In him Christ sees 'the travail of His soul,' and is satisfied. (Isaiah liii. 11.) In him the long, stern trial and discipline of Christ's incarnation and the bitter agony of His cross, begin to bear their full, ripe fruit, and the Master rejoices over him with joy, 'rests in his love,' and 'joys over him with singing.' (Zephaniah iii. 17.) In him 'the earnest expectation of the creation,' which 'waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God,' and which 'groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,' begins to be fulfilled, the long night of earth's shame and sorrow and sin is passing, and the dawning day of the reign of peace and righteousness is breaking. Hallelujah!

I knew a father in Christ whose children said, 'It is easy to be good when father is around'; not because they feared him and must be good, but because goodness flourished in the sunshine of his Christlike presence.

I knew a husband in Christ whose wife said, 'He is like David, who returned to bless his household.' His presence was a benediction to his home.

I knew a man who had been a hard, brutal drunkard, but was now a Salvation blacksmith 'in Christ.' One day a farmer brought his mare to this blacksmith to have her shod, and with her he brought straps and

tackle to strap her up, for she was so fearful or so savage that no one could shoe her otherwise. But the blacksmith 'in Christ' said, 'Let me get acquainted with her.' He walked around her, stroked her gently, and spoke to her kindly and softly, while she rubbed her soft nose against him, smelled his garments, and got acquainted with him.

She seemed to make a discovery that this was a new creature -- a kind she had never met before, especially in a blacksmith's shop. Everything about him seemed to say to her, 'fear not,' and she was not afraid. He lifted her foot and took off a shoe, and from that day forth he shod that mare without strap or tackle, while she stood in perfect quiet and unconcern. Poor horse! she had waited all her lifetime to see one of the sons of God, and when she saw him she was not afraid.

And the whole earth is waiting for the unveiling, the revealing, 'the manifestation of the sons of God' -- waiting for the men and women, the boys and girls, who live in Christ and in whom Christ lives. When the world is filled with such men or controlled by them, then, and only then, will strikes and wars, and bitter rivalries and insane hatreds, and disgusting and hellish evils cease, and the promise and purpose of Christ's coming be fulfilled.

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