

The Indwelling Spirit of Christ

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Our identity as Christians is based on our relationship to Christ. A common phrase to describe this identity is “who we are in Christ.” Our relationship to Christ as our savior gains us favored status with God, imparts Christ’s purity and righteousness to cover our sinfulness, and grants us unrestricted access to God so we can have an intimate relationship with Him. It takes a lifetime to fully understand these deep truths, but we cannot stop there. If we want to lay hold of God, we must explore a second stage. After we have laid the foundation of who we are in Christ, we must then discover who Christ is in us.

All things start with a focus on ourselves. Who am I? Why am I here? What do I want? As we mature, the focus ought to shift off of ourselves. The same holds true with our identity in Christ. After we have established who we are in Christ and have arrived at a comfortable level of security in our standing with God, it’s essential to move to a more Christ-centered focus. This shift in focus causes us to ask who Christ is in us. What can we know about the Spirit of Christ who inhabits us? What does it mean that Christ indwells me? How do I live my life to give space and freedom to this indwelling Spirit? I doubt I can answer these questions with great accuracy, but I hope I can inspire you to think differently about Christ.

Christ in Us

Christ said He had to leave the Earth so He could send another, a Comforter, to be with us (John 14). Christ knew He could only be in one place at a time, so He devised a way to be with many people at one time by sending His Spirit to dwell inside those who receive Him. This isn’t some second-rate, inferior replacement for Christ. This is the full package. Everything you believe about Christ is bundled in this package because the package IS Christ. He Himself dwells inside you, not a watered-down version. Because our lives still feel unremarkable, we tend to think that the package is more like a Jesus action figure that sits on our dashboard inspiring us on our journey, but not offering much practical use. The problem is not with the package, but with us not knowing what to do with it. It’s like having an Amazon Echo device sitting on

our counter, but we don't know how to engage it, so it sits there unused and ineffective.

In Ephesians 3:8, Paul refers to the boundless riches of Christ. Other translations use adjectives such as unfathomable, immeasurable, or infinite. The New Living version translates Paul's words to say "the endless treasures available in Christ." That phrase inspires me to imagine a treasure room filled to the ceiling with golden riches, all available to us in Christ. Why do we not utilize this treasure? We often neglect spiritual gifts because we feel unworthy or cannot believe they are ours to use. So our treasure room remains closed even though we've been given the key. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:22-23, "Everything belongs to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God." The treasure IS Christ. His boundless riches are found in us because He dwells in us.

Christ by Faith

If Christ and all He possesses are found in us, then our first response ought to be gratitude. Let us be cognizant of what a great treasure we have, Christ in us. So how do we tap into this resource? We apprehend Christ by faith, believing that Christ's fullness is available to us, believing we are worthy of such a gift, and believing Christ will manifest in our lives in response to our faith. God wants the Spirit of Christ to be a real and active force in our lives. That's why Christ gave us His Spirit.

Let us exert more faith in Christ, not only the Christ who sits in Heaven, but the Christ who sits on the throne of our hearts. Let us depend more on the Spirit of Christ who inhabits us. We need to give God more opportunity to express Himself in our lives. The Spirit of Christ can only dwell where He is invited. Therefore, let us invite Him into our daily interactions, into our thoughts, and into our words. By compartmentalizing our lives, we limit God's reach. God wants to infiltrate our lives in every aspect, but we get in the way.

The older I get, the more I see how much I restrict God by my own fears and insecurities.

Christ to the World

I visualize myself as a portal or doorway between God and the world. Christ is inside me, and the world is outside me. Christ yearns to reach through this opening and touch the world He loves so much. But it's up to me how wide an opening I give God to do so. How much will I open up my heart and life to God? I believe that my experience of the reality of God is directly proportional to the size of the opening I give Him. We create an opening for God by clearing a way that's devoid of self and ego. It is an empty space that God can fill with Himself. It is a setting aside of my agenda and attachments.

In its ultimate expression, Christ in us becomes Christ in the world. Christ inhabits us to such an extent that we become His hands and feet in this world. I believe that is what Paul meant when he prayed that we “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). In this state, Christ inhabits us fully, filling every part of our lives. This fullness overflows our lives as the character and activity of Christ is made manifest to the world for others to experience. I often wonder if such a thing is possible for someone like me, but when I consider what an amazing resource I have in the indwelling Spirit of Christ, I'm reminded that all things are possible with Christ (Matthew 19:26).

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