

## One Plus One Equals One

by Dan Stone

What would it be like if Paul's phrase, "*Christ in you, the hope of glory,*" were a daily reality in our lives? Is it even possible? Is there anything we can do to make it happen?

There's *nothing* we can do, for it is already a finished fact! If we read John's Gospel, we find that Christ really has become one with the Christian. There is therefore a certain quality of life that He imparted to us, a life which spontaneously flows out to touch the lives of others. This life is quite different from what I had heard about for so many years of my life. For twenty-three years I was the one doing the doing. And I was doing for God. I hoped that what I was doing pleased God. I hoped that what I was doing honored God, and that it would bring people to Him.

Eventually the Holy Spirit, who is our only teacher, impressed upon my inner being that because God is the real Doer, there really wasn't anything a Christian could do for God but be available.

What's our part? Availability. We simply say, "*Well, Lord, do it,*" and recognize that He is doing it. How do we recognize? Not by outward appearances, We recognize from the heart, We have a new heart, so we recognize from the heart that God is - our innermost Being. God the Spirit has united Himself to our spirit and together those two are operating as a single unit. There are two, but they're operating as a single unit. That is our starting point.

A short but fundamental sentence in First John says, "God is love." It doesn't say *Dan has love*, and it doesn't say *Dan is love*. It says *God is love*. There must be some way to get this together: if *I cannot love*, and *God is love*, then how do I get that love in me? The only way that God is going to be loved the way I wanted to love Him is for God to be that love in me loving Himself-God doing the loving by means of me. If that is true, we're still on the merry-go-round of "*I must, I have to, I ought, and I should.*"

In the past there were days when I felt I ought to, but I didn't want to. And there were other days when I felt I should, but I didn't want to then either. How could I solve that problem? How could I stop worrying about the ought-to's and the should's?

I had to learn arithmetic according to Paul. I had to learn that one plus One equals one. In I Corinthians 6:17 Paul says, "He that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit.*" Now Paul didn't say that the "he" was Jesus Christ: he said that the "he" is joined to the Lord. So there are two persons, a "he" and Jesus. Only in the realm of faith does Jesus' death amount to anything - when you believe that He was God's Anointed and that His death wasn't just a physical death on the Cross. His death was for the world. His death was for every individual in the world; and sometime in the past you, like I, reached out and said, "I'll take Jesus Christ." And you got Him.

You *have* Jesus as your Savior. You know that. I can't shake you on that. Now let's go further. How do you come to believe that Christ *lives* in you? Ask yourself: How did you ever believe that He died for you? One makes as much sense as the other. If He could die for you, He could certainly live in you and through you to His world. That's what we're talking about - Christ living in every Christian person. Not all Christians know this; what's important is that you know it. We can't be responsible for other people, but we can open up our own hearts.

Remember Philippians I :21? "*For me to live is Christ.*" For me to live is Christ living through me: that's what Paul meant. It was Christ living out His life as Paul when Paul went to all those places that God sent him, speaking to people in the marketplace, or to those he stayed with, or sometimes in the synagogue. As long as they would listen to him, it was Christ making His appeal, through Paul.

A paraphrase of Paul's 2 Corinthians 5:20 could be, "*It is Christ making His appeal by us.*" Not us *for* Him, but Christ *by* us. If that's true, then who's going to the grocery store tomorrow? Who's going downtown? Who's going fishing? Who's going to relax in the sun? Christ is, if that's what you're going to do tomorrow, because He's vitally in union with you. What's He interested in? What you're interested in! What's He doing? What you're doing! What's He after? What you're after! What's He concerned about? What you're concerned about! Why? Because you and He are *one*.

You may say, "Well, I'm not always concerned about religious things." Wonderful! Neither was He! In the Gospels He was seldom concerned about "religious" things. He seemed more interested in being with people. He was down by the lake; people saw Him down there. He was in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus; people heard about Him being there. He was in the home of Simon Peter; people heard about Him being there. Every once in a while they'd hear about Him being at church, and that's when they'd ask Him to speak!

Jesus wasn't religious. He pointed at the religious and said, "*You hypocrites. The cup is all clean outside, but inside is filthiness.*" He didn't emphasize religion. But He did love people. And He did have a word of life for people. Didn't the woman at the well hear life? Didn't Nicodemus hear life? Didn't the thief on the Cross hear and see life? Sure they did, and countless others whose names are not known to us. They responded to *life*. So, we go about our business-we are life, that's all. Just carriers of *The Life*.

How can this be? How can I be so unconcerned, so uncritical, so free of judgment about my own character and my own purposes? Because life is spontaneous. Before you became a Christian, you never got up out of bed and said, "I'm going to try to be lost today." Did anybody go around saying, "Where's that book on how to be lost? I'm going to try to be lost today") No, you just got up and were lost. There wasn't any difficulty in being lost, because you were born that way.

Now is it difficult being a Christian? I thought it was, because for years I got up and I said, "Now where's that Book that tells me how to be a Christian?" I'd look in this Book, and I'd see something like this: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*" and I would think, "That's what I'll do. The Bible says it, and I'll do it." I would go down the road, and fifteen minutes later I would see somebody I just couldn't stand. Then I'd read something else about, "You shall not do such and such." So, I would say, "I won't do it. You won't catch me doing that because I'm a Christian. I love God. I won't do it." But just give me enough time, and before long I'd do it. So would you.

Christians react in different ways to that frustration. Some give up on Christianity altogether because they reach the conclusion, "I can't do it." Others keep plowing right along. But those who sincerely love God and want to serve Him usually end up very frustrated. And that's exactly what's meant to happen. All of us need to come to the recognition that we simply can't do it on our own.

When God and Moses were talking together and God gave Moses the Law, He said, "*Take this down to them. This is what I am like, and if they will keep this Law, I will be their God and*

*they will be my people.*" Moses went down and read the Law to them. Of course they should have said, "We can't do that! That's the character of God." But they said, "Ah, we'll do it. We'll do it." Did they do it? The Old Testament is a history of the fact that they couldn't do it. We're no different. When we got saved, we grabbed the Bible and said, "We'll do it!" And we haven't done it either.

A couple of years ago I discovered that I was just a New Testament Jew. I think most Christians are. You know why? Where was the Jewish God? Their God was "up there." Where was my God? He was "up there." How did they try to serve their God? By keeping the Law and offering sacrifices and periodically asking for their sins to be forgiven. How did I try to serve God? By keeping the Law, and offering sacrifices—mostly myself on that altar—and then asking for forgiveness for having failed. Was there any difference? No, I was just a New Testament Jew.

Until the Christian life comes as spontaneously as being lost once did, you don't know Christ operating as you. The Old Testament prophets knew that. They knew God didn't want the blood of bulls and goats, but a contrite heart. He said He would give them a new heart, that the Law would be written not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tables of the heart; and that no one would need a teacher, because all would be taught of the Lord and all would know the Lord.

Can Christ be trusted in union with you and me to live that life) I can now say yes. I couldn't always say yes, because I looked like a bad risk. I looked wishy-washy. I looked hot and cold, in and out, up and down. I couldn't say yes until I wore myself out trying, because I was a God-lover, and I thought that's what I was supposed to do for God. You probably are a God-lover too.

But we're God-lovers because God has given us a *new* heart—the Person of Christ. We are not the same old persons. We're new persons. The moment that you and I took Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, a new person was brought into being that had never existed before, because a new Person was placed there. God put His Spirit into us, and the old union died forever. A brand-new creature had come into existence. Isn't that wonderful? That's the Gospel. That's the Good News. Not just that we're saved from sin, but that God has taken over our lives and a brand-new person has been brought into existence. God lives out His life through us. Paul said, "*For it is God who is at work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*"

So now as we love and live and act, we say, "Christ, you are the one loving and living and acting in my life." At bottom, we don't have any desire to do what's wrong. If it's still a burning, zealous drive of our heart to do what is wrong, then we would have to question whether we'd ever been born again. But we don't desire to do what's wrong. Occasionally we do, but it's a surface whim, not a deep down want. So, we don't judge ourselves on the occasional lapses.

When we were lost, we occasionally did things that looked like God. It didn't count as righteousness unto life—because our union was wrong. Now that we're saved, occasionally we're going to do things that don't look like God is living in us—and they don't count as sin unto death. But here's the beautiful thing about union with Christ. We are not condemned by these slip-ups. We just confess the sin, acknowledge that it is covered by the blood, and go on.

How are we to know for sure when we are doing something wrong? Do we necessarily need someone to tell us? No, for the Spirit says, "OK, check. Stop right there. That's not us." It's the Spirit who convicts us of error. The Spirit will never fail to steer us on God's way. When

someone tells me about something he doesn't like or something he feels isn't very Christlike, I have to say, "Well, I accept your word, *but* I'll have to wait on the Spirit to check that in me." I'm not going to decide what's of God and what isn't of God based on how it looks, or how it sounds, or how it feels at my soul level or on what someone else says.

We must always decide whether or not something is of God based on the inner Spirit. If He checks us and says, "Hold it, that's not us," then we must believe it's God. God may well be in that strong word saying "No," as easily as in the soft, sentimental "Yes."

When the Spirit checks, I take the forgiveness God has already provided for me. Now let's get on with who we really are in Christ Jesus! A new heart. A new person. A new life. A new purpose. A new drive. A new interest. God is better able to keep us than we are able to keep ourselves. God is better able to produce what will please Him than we can produce what we *think* will please Him. The latter is from the flesh, and the flesh profits nothing. The former is of the Spirit, and the Spirit always has life . Yes, life. Christ is our life.