

Christ Dwelling in You

by Norman P. Grubb

We have been born again and baptized in the Holy Spirit; however, many of us still have a problem. We have entered into a new world of praise and worship in the liberty of the Spirit, but we quickly discover that daily living still brings with it a multitude of pressures and problems. We are unable to come up with an honest and satisfactory solution to them. We find ourselves, as did Paul, unable to do what we ought to do and unavoidably doing what we should not do.

Before my conversion experience, I was looking from the bottom up instead of from the top down. The bottom in this case was I, myself, in my humanity. I was a slave to sin, under the curse and condemnation of the law, and that is where I wished to remain.

Thank God, when I was a young man, hospitalized by a football injury, I suddenly saw how totally self-centered I was. Everything was for me. Something was wrong somewhere. In fact, I had seen sin in its very essence. Soon after that a British army major, who used his lovely home to invite young people in for lawn tennis, asked me if I belonged to Christ. Had he said to a church, I would have said yes; but because he said to Christ as a living person, I had to say no.

I saw then that without Christ hell was my destiny. I recognized that it was the only place where I was fit to go. So in my first act of genuine personal faith I asked forgiveness for my sins, and in a flash I knew my sins were gone forever. Jesus was my personal Savior, God was my Father and heaven my home.

Quite a change for a young football fanatic. But while I knew that I was a new creation in Christ, I had yet to get things into full focus. I could only say with Paul that now I delighted in the law of God after the inward man. But I also knew from obvious experience that my renewed self had attached to it my outer “flesh” — my bodily desires and my soul or emotional reactions in daily life. There were resentments, attractive lusts, hates, depressions, fears, pride and all the rest.

My error was that I hadn't realized the fall of man meant separation from God. I now had my relationship to God restored by my new birth in Christ, but I still regarded myself as a distinct human being apart from him.

I proceeded in my new way of Christian living by “looking unto him” for *help* in all my tribulations and temptations. Notice the emphasis on the word “help.” In other words, as a renewed human in Christ, I believed he could make me better, more patient, pure, loving, free from fear, resentment, lusts, and other sins.

As a result of taking the step of sanctification by faith, I expected to become a holy person. My eyes remained really on myself. Why then did I not improve? Why did I still fall into sins? Why couldn't I conquer these things? Why couldn't I have peace, power, heart satisfaction? Again, I was looking from the bottom up, rather than from the top down.

It was something new to me to realize that, in spite of what we like to think, the human self never improves. Left to myself I can only be self-loving (for only in union with God who is other-love, can I be an other-lover). By myself I am helpless, a slave to my flesh which in this self-loving world forces me to live for myself. In my new nature I don't want to conform to

the world, but I can't help it. As Paul puts it: "*To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not*" (Rom. 7:18).

Struggle as we may, call on God for help as we may, we find no relief. We remain *bound*. It took Moses forty years of running from Pharaoh (instead of Pharaoh running from him). Jacob was exploited twenty years by Laban and terrified of his brother Esau before he discovered he was a prince in God's household. David spent eight years hiding in a cave before he could sit on the throne. It took Elisha eight years to find he must have the Spirit of Elijah. So it is in the life-history of every man of God, great or small, including ourselves. We must have the revelation of the new covenant so that we may come into focus more quickly. Why? It is a necessary part of spiritual education.

I am to be a real person through eternity and must function effectively as a son of God. So if I am to operate and manage God's universe as co-heir with Christ, I have to learn the difference between a misused self in its false separation, and a rightly used self in its Vine-branch union.

And that is the secret. After our conversion, like these men, we each have to learn by experience that a redeemed self, regarded as independent and separate from God, is an illusion. We have to be cornered until we are so done in, that the revelation can dawn on us. We know reconciliation. Now we must know union. We are never again separated selves.

Jesus, the perfect man, said, "*I and my Father are one ... of myself I can do nothing ... the Father that dwells in me, He does the works.*"

Spirit unites with spirit. "*I live,*" wrote the redeemed Paul, but then corrected himself: "*yet not I, but Christ.*" He did not mean Christ dying for him, nor Christ near him, not even Christ in him as if separate from him, but Christ living his life, Christ in Paul's form; and so for each of us, Christ in Tom's form, Christ in Elizabeth's form.

What that means to me in my life's struggles is, first, that this inner "mystery" is a conscious inner reality to me—that I am in this eternal unity with the Trinity. That is precisely the full meaning of Pentecost and the baptism of the Spirit in its personal effect on me, and as explained by the writers of the Epistles. Christ and I have seen ourselves by grace as one, and I am inwardly conscious of it. I never have to question that fact again. I live, like Paul, "*by the faith of it.*"

Now as this Christ-union becomes permanent in us, we live our lives from the top down instead of the bottom up. Our consciousness is no longer "*I'm a poor, struggling, bewildered, defeated disciple, very much aware of my weak human self and flesh responses.*" No, I'm a free son of God, living a normal human life, but dead to sin, dead to law which has no further right to shove its demands, threats and condemnations on me. Instead, I am in Christ's perfection, living at ease in a spontaneous compulsion of the Spirit who causes me to walk in His ways, and to fulfill His only command — to love.

And now when all these flesh—incitements assault me—fears, anger, hates, lusts, pride, depressions, inabilities — I no longer say "I ought or ought not," and struggle in vain. But I say, "*That's my flesh talking to me, but I'm not in the flesh, I'm in the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:9). All I do is transfer my consciousness of a temptation or stress to the consciousness of who I really am, Christ in me; and light swallows up darkness, Spirit counteracts flesh, and Christ is magnified in my body.

How clearly I saw that when I was a missionary in the Congo. I was not short on love for God and zeal for souls; indeed the “*zeal of His house*” ate me up. I loved for nothing and nobody else. But I just didn’t have what it took to be Christ’s representative to my brother Africans. I did not have the quality of love which identified me with them, nor the faith that God’s transformations could really happen in folks so darkened (forgetting that I had been just as darkened, only in a more “civilized” fashion!). Neither had I the power to see God at work. What was I to do? I tried to seek God so He would anoint me that I might have the necessary love, faith and power. That was my mistake. The Spirit quietly put me right by the little phrase “God is love.” That little word “is” got me.

Oh, I said, then love isn’t a thing God has and gives me. He is the love: love is a Person. It was as if He stood before me and said, “*Love is not something I give you. I am that love.*” But what about me? I need love and power. What good is it for God to merely say He is that? Then I saw Colossians 3:11: “*Now Christ is all and in all.*”

That’s it — not I becoming something, but I containing Someone. I am just the vessel, earthenware pot, just the container; and the vessel doesn’t become what it contains. What a relief and release from straining for self-improvement as I took the further step of entering in by faith with the accompanying witness of the Spirit. I then realized the eternal union of Galatians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 6:17, which state:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

And, “*But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit with Him.*”

So here is the answer. First, as humans we will always walk in the flesh, and always be conscious of the assaults of all forms of temptations. Did not Jesus say to His disciples, “*You are those who have continued with me in My temptations?*” That is our privilege to be real participants in a real world, in order to overcome it and shine as lights in it.

We no longer confront our flesh battles as flesh people, as if we humans should conquer them. We admit the flesh doesn’t fight our battles. But if we recognize our baptism of the Spirit with the consciousness of our union with God, we say with Paul that we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9). In this God-given consciousness, it naturally comes to us to transfer our temporary recognition of the outer pull of flesh (soul and body) on us to our true recognition of who we really are — Christ the Real Self in ourselves. By our believing in Him, the positive “Yes and Amen” in us, the law of faith always operates. What we believe in takes over — Spirit swallowing up flesh. And we walk on free.

If we have momentarily followed the flesh, the shed blood of Christ removes our wrongs from God’s sight and ours, and our consciences are immediately cleansed. He has forgotten, so we, too, must forget. And thus, free from ourselves, we are not only conquerors but more than conquerors, free to take on other people’s needs and minister to them. This is the victory which has overcome our world. This is our faith.