

The Bridge of Faith

by Gary Bonikowsky

Several years ago, in a state of acute frustration and much mental exasperation, I sat down and penned the following question to myself. "Can it be, that I, just living my life, am really Christ living His life in and through me, as indicated in Galatians 2:20?"

Years of pondering the sublime truths relating to the mystery of the Gospel as presented by Paul and John, and brought to light in recent times through *Union Life* and those precious ones connected with it, had brought me to this critical question. The ensuing months brought me back to this question time and time again, as I continued my search for the elusive answer to this enigma, even as reason demanded, "How can this be?"

But no matter how diligently I searched, there was always a gap between that which I longed to know of union with Christ as a conscious reality and that which I did know and could rely on—namely, that I was redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, had become a new creation in Him, had been reconciled to the Father of my spirit, and was now a member of the family of God and had eternal life. I even knew that somehow Christ lived in me— but Christ living *His* life as me? How could this be?

Somehow in my spirit I knew that Christ living His life as me could be the only true resting place for a soul in its earthly sojourn. And I did so want to enter into this promised rest—the rest of inner adequacy, of knowing I had what it took to be all that I was meant to be.

The great truths concerning my redemption and eternal destiny which had become such an unshakeable part of my being, as wonderful and thrilling as they were, pertained only to my past and future, leaving me with a desperate present. I needed something equally real and unshakeable for the here and now of my day-to-day existence. I had seen this rest in the lives of those who claimed to have found it, and was convinced of its reality, but how could I make it a reality in my own experience?

During my desperate struggle, I became painfully aware that there is a vast difference between *revelation* and *realization*. When I first caught a glimpse of this promised rest, I sat down and fired off a letter which eventually found its way into the pages of *Union Life* ("From the Mailbag," August, 1980). In it I claimed, rather boldly, to have entered into this rest. Now perhaps in a sense I did—for you can't lay hold of something which you haven't seen to be "real" and available to you. However, in a larger sense, I now see my experience at that time as more like that of Moses viewing the Promised Land from a faraway mountaintop than that of Joshua standing firmly on the far bank of the river Jordan. I had been across the river in my vision, but not in my experience, and the gap still remained.

Some two years later, after many varied attempts to bridge that gap by every conceivable analogy and parable my benumbed thinking could search out or contrive, I finally laid down my worn-out charts and phrases and sat in hopeless despair—and suddenly the light began to dawn. I looked up and saw that there was not only a bridge gracefully spanning this impossible gap, but precisely the same bridge which I had once crossed long ago. It was a bridge forever invisible to human reasoning and endeavor—invisible to anything which would defile the Promised Land beyond. It was the *bridge of faith*, or perhaps more correctly, the affirmation of faith which "*calls those things that be not as though they were*" and spans the gap between *revelation* and *realization*.

So there I stood—after all my struggling through that vast wilderness of thoughts, feelings, concepts, principles and personal consecrations—realizing that I had come full circle, only to find myself confronted with the same bridge of faith I had crossed years before when I took Christ as my personal Savior without a shred of "substantial" evidence to support my

claim. Only this time the bridge was leading to my true resting place in Christ. I had discovered the way home at last! Thus I came to see that there was nothing that I could do to produce the longed-for realization of union and consequent rest. It is the free gift of God in Christ, and is received by grace through faith, just as the realization of justification and eternal life was.

And so once again I was reduced to the exercise of my primary creaturely function—simply to receive and nurture that spirit-reality which had been revealed to me, however dimly. I was to receive by faith and nurture by affirmation this supreme spirit truth that had so eluded my conscious grasp—that somehow I, just living my life, was really Christ living His life in and through me as declared in His Word, regardless of manifold appearances to the contrary. It was the same simple step I took out of the realm of appearances long ago when I received Christ as my Savior by faith and confessed (affirmed) that I was a new creation in Him, even though I often didn't look like it.

And now, having my feet put back on the only true way, I began to say simply, and quite feebly at first, "Christ, You are my life," in spite of feelings and reasonings which responded, "Some life!" Of course, I didn't feel one bit different. But I had made a start. I had begun moving from Satan's illusion of separation to the truth of who I really was in Christ, and as I became emboldened in this "nonsense," I began to desire a more comprehensive affirmation of faith based on a biblical description of one in whom Christ has come to dwell. What could I say of my true self that would be in line with spirit reality according to God's revealed word?

Bit by bit the picture unfolded until I had what I consider to be a fairly complete, Bible-based statement of the truth about God's redeemed in Christ:

*I am
that I am,
joined to the Christ;
eternal union,
He—as me
as and where I am:
perfect rest,
total sufficiency,
moment by moment,
here and now.*

Now, it would be dishonest for me to pretend that I do not balk on occasion, in fact quite often, at the enormity of some of the phrases in the above affirmation, especially when viewed against the apparent "reality" of my daily experience. But I continue to make confession as to their truth, for this is what God says about His redeemed, of whom I am one by grace. He said it, not I, and He is true to His word. I merely dare to affirm what His word reveals, and maintain that affirmation regardless of appearances and feelings to the contrary—trusting that He will confirm by the inner witness of the Spirit, in His own way and time, what we boldly affirm of His revealed truth to us.

The world says, "I'll believe it when I see it." But God says, "You'll see it when you believe it." Dare to believe it, dare to say it, and surely you will see it, for "*If ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established*" (Isa.7:9).