

A photograph of a bird's nest containing several young chicks and two blue eggs, set against a background of a tree trunk. The nest is made of dry grass and twigs. One chick is prominently featured in the center, with its beak open. The background shows the rough, textured bark of a tree trunk.

Does it work?

*Finding Rest In The Cross*

Patrick J. Griffiths



# Does It Work?

Finding Rest in the Cross

Patrick J. Griffiths



Torn Veil Publications

Copyright © 2011, 2014 by Patrick J. Griffiths. Published by Torn Veil Publications, the publishing arm of Waukesha Bible Church

Waukesha Bible Church  
S53 W24079 Glendale Road  
Waukesha, Wisconsin 53189  
[www.waukeshabible.org](http://www.waukeshabible.org)

Printed in the United States of America.

Cover Design: Joanna Gilbert  
Cover Photograph: Joanna Gilbert

ISBN 978-0-9843195-1-0

All rights reserved solely by the author. The author guarantees all contents are original and do not infringe upon the legal rights of any other person or work. No part of this book, except for brief quotations for the purpose of review or comment, may be reproduced in any form without the permission of the author. The views expressed in this book are not necessarily those of the publisher. Unless otherwise identified, all Scripture quotations in this publication are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

*~For Christ and His Church.*



# AUTHOR

Dr. Patrick Griffiths is an energetic teacher with a passion to shout the supremacy of God in all things, by finding, celebrating, and declaring that Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come. This is achieved through the systematic study of God's Word, an activity to which Pat has dedicated his life. He was saved at the age of 17, immediately enrolled in Bible College, and subsequently pursued an M.Div, Th.M, and a D.Min degree. For over 30 years he has taught students of all ages and has mentored many for vocational ministry. His heart lies in the local church and her mission to carry this message of grace to every tongue, tribe, people and nation.

# NOTE ABOUT TEXT

In the following chapters, all parts of the text that the author has emphasized are in bold font. Some of these sections are both in bold and in all-caps. Notice of these formatting techniques is given only here in order to prevent redundancy and clutter in the endnotes.

The author is using the New American Standard Bible, if not otherwise noted.

## Fonts Used:

Titles: Book Antiqua 24 pt

Body: Book Antiqua 12 pt

Scripture: Book Antiqua 10 pt

Boxes: Tahoma 10pt



# CONTENTS

	Prologue	1
	Introduction	4
1	Christ, Our Sufficiency	8
2	Christ, Our Identity	23
3	Christ, Our Victory	39
4	Christ, Our Glory	55
	Epilogue	69
	Endnotes	71



# PROLOGUE

God, by His redemptive activity, has secured for Himself a people who will love Him, obey Him, and be blessed by Him by enjoying His presence forever. This is the *Story* of the Bible. It is a *Story* that God wrote before pouring the foundation of the world. This *Story* includes all of us in all the details of our lives. The backdrop for the *Story* is the rebellion of His people against Him. They chose to find their pleasure in the created over finding their pleasure in the Creator. God's relentless pursuit of His people and unconditional love for them is heightened because of their own wrong choices. Such actions on God's part for His people reveal the inexhaustible riches of His grace. God will not be denied the object of His affection. He acts and secures a people for Himself. Although redeemed, His people struggle with a fallen nature in a fallen world and fight to believe the promises of their Savior and Lord.

**Often they find themselves wondering if the reality**

**of the experience is stronger than the reality of the promise.** Often the weight of the visible blinds them to the glory of the invisible. Yet nothing created can stop the *Story* from its completion. In fact, created shadows sit as signposts pointing His people to the promise: God is now here. The shadows of God are limitless. They are infinite and everywhere. All of them are designed to do one thing: point to God. He is the blessing that promises unimaginable pleasure, unbridled joy, palatable happiness, profound rest, and liberating contentment.

Our circumstances, trials, frustrations, difficulties, sufferings, disappointments, confusions, and failures cause us to ask the question, “Why isn’t it working for me? If Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come, why do I still struggle?” It is only as we see ourselves as a part of God’s *Story* that we can find meaning, rest, and happiness. These experiences drive us to the substance, which is the true *Story* of creation and life itself. All of these experiences direct us to know and embrace four unchanging truths. These four truths form bedrock in the *Story* of God for His people. All four truths focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, as the redeeming and reigning God, is enough for all this life holds and for all that is contained in the life to follow.

It is the intent of this study to help the Christian learn about and rest in the penetrating goodness of God to His people and to discover personally and intimately

## *Does It Work?*

that Jesus is the radiant, visible glory of the triune God. He is the substance of every shadow, the revealed picture of every puzzle. He is the keeper, fulfiller, and guardian of every promise and testament. He is the King who sits on an immutable throne. He is the Savior of sinners, the subject of every legend, and the Shepherd of all sheep. He is the foundation on which every building is constructed and the mortar that binds entire buildings together. He is the sinew and ligament of every joint. He is the end of all satisfaction, the hero of every story, and the champion of every conflict. My desire for you, the reader, is to be consumed by the grace of God as it exists in the person and work of Jesus Christ. God has written a *Story* that overflows the literary boundaries of the Bible and engulfs all of life. This includes you and me. May you find Him to be all you need today and one day all you want.

# INTRODUCTION

Is Christian faith a type of narcotic that deceives you into believing lies? Is the faith hallucinogenic and so powerful as to create an alternate reality? Have you ever been in a place spiritually where you began to wonder if what you believe was fraudulent? Have you ever wondered if what you professed with your lips was nothing more than a fairy tale used to make “people feel better about their distress?” Does Christianity deliver on what it promises?

According to Karl Marx, religion is an expression of material realities and economic injustice. Thus, problems in religion are ultimately problems in society. Religion is not the disease but merely a symptom. It is used by oppressors to make people feel better about the distress they experience due to being poor and exploited. This is the backdrop for his comment that religion is the “opium of the masses.”<sup>1</sup>

In our context, we are essentially asking if God actually

## *Does It Work?*

performs what He promises (Rom. 4:21). Will God keep His word? Or is all this an illusion of smoke and mirrors? Think about this for just a moment:

- God promises rest . . . yet we live in turmoil (Matt. 11:28-30).
- God promises peace . . . yet we live with insecurity (Rom. 5:1).
- God promises love . . . yet we live with rejection (Rom. 8:35).
- God promises family . . . yet we live with isolation and loneliness (Eph. 4:25).

We live in a world of ruthless economics, big business, and investments. In life we must ask a very basic question, "Does it work?" If what we are expecting does not pan out, we return the purchase or pull the plug on the project. This is why our marriages fail, our frustration level is so high, and our depression is so deep.

What if resting in the promises of God does not seem to make a difference in life's circumstances? What if our circumstances never change? What if our marriages fail, our children rebel, our employment ceases, and our health breaks? What if all of life becomes a constant and never-ending struggle? What if, at the end of the day, when the dust settles and we are all alone, it still does not appear to work? What if life is filled with bitterness, apathy, disappointment, depression, and regret? Where do we go when the

## *Does It Work?*

promises of God appear empty and hollow? What if the feeling of victory is always elusive and unattainable? Unfortunately, **one's perspective will often create his or her reality.** Yet the people of God are called upon to live by faith in the God who promises to be all He says He is. The Word of God says it does work, that we can learn to rest even in our difficulty by seeing Christ as our Sufficiency, our Identity, our Victory, and our Glory. Such mind renewal will transform our daily lives.

Four foundational truths control this short study:

- First, Christ our Sufficiency - He is all we need and will one day be all we want. He is enough in this life and in the life to come.
- Second, Christ our Identity - He forms our identity before God. We are who He is before the Father.
- Third, Christ our Victory - His victory is our victory. Our life is the outworking of His perfect plan.
- Fourth, Christ our Glory - He is our boast. Our greatest strength is our weakness and our only boast is His cross.

The passion of this study is that we walk away basking in the greatness of our God, contemplating the enormity of His work on behalf of His people, and considering who we now are because of who He is. Oh friend, may the Holy Spirit open your eyes to see, your



*Does It Work?*

ears to hear, and your hearts to feel a love that is without condition, an acceptance that is without requirement, a forgiveness that is without limit, a favor without merit, and a service that is without reward. May we experience a grace that reigns because the cross still stands.

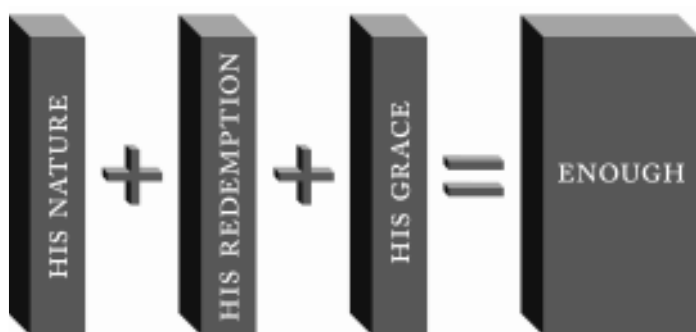
*Introduction*

1

# Christ, Our Sufficiency

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles **the unfathomable riches of Christ** . . .

(Ephesians. 3:8)



*He is immeasurable in His nature, redemption, and grace.  
Therefore, He is enough in this life and the life to come.*

Is Jesus enough or do we need more? The premise of this chapter is straightforward: No matter how dreadful our immediate circumstances might appear to be or how devastating the blow we face or how dark the night, Jesus is enough for everything in this life and for the life to come. He promises peace and rest, and in Him, we find all this and more.

*Christ, Our Identity*

## *Does It Work?*

What is meant by *sufficiency*? The 1913 Webster Dictionary defines *sufficiency* in this way: "Equal to the end proposed; adequate to wants; enough." By definition the word *sufficient* means adequate and enough.

There are, however, two ways of understanding the idea of sufficiency. First, there is the thought conveyed suggesting there is barely enough. It is to say the need is \$10 and \$10 will meet the need. This is how we often experience the idea of sufficiency.

Figuratively speaking, we sometimes find ourselves with our heads just barely above the water. We sink down holding our breath, touch the bottom, then push ourselves up above the water, get another breath, and continue to repeat the cycle. We get just enough air to survive. No matter how hard we thrash about, we continue to sink. Our desperate attempts are simply prolonging the inevitable outcome.

It is in this way many view the sufficiency of Christ as it relates to our daily experiences. He is adequate, enough, and plenty. However, He does not prove lavish or abundant in His resources. In so doing, we just barely get by emotionally and spiritually and, as a result, **life is something endured, not enjoyed.**

Conversely, there is a second way of viewing sufficiency. It is a sufficiency marked by such words

as lavish, excessive, and immeasurable. **It is coming to see the excessive nature of who Christ is in relation to what we need.**

Today, I want us to see that Christ is far beyond what we can possibly think or imagine. He far exceeds anything for which we could possibly hope.

HE FAR EXCEEDS  
ANYTHING FOR  
WHICH WE COULD  
POSSIBLY HOPE.

It is in this sense that His sufficiency is immeasurable.

Three areas reveal the immeasurable character of His sufficiency. We will begin with His nature.



**He is Immeasurable in His Nature (Col. 1:19; 2:9; 3:11).**

What is nature? When we speak of the nature of Jesus Christ, we are referring to what He is in His essence or being. It is what makes Him who He is. The Scripture speaks clearly on this issue; Jesus is the full embodiment of all that is God.

For it was the Father's good pleasure for **all the fullness to dwell in Him.** (Col. 1:19)

For in **Him all the fullness of Deity dwells** in bodily form. (Col. 2:9)

Colossians 1:19 and 2:9 use the Greek word *plaroma*, which means, "to fill copiously." "The word [plaroma] emphasizes the fact that the divine fullness of love and

*Does It Work?*

power acts and rules in all its perfection through Christ. The choice of the word is thus easy to understand. It is selected because it suggests **completeness**. It has pleased God that the whole fullness of essence should take up dwelling in Christ."<sup>1</sup>

HE IS THE FULL  
EMBODIMENT OF  
ALL THAT IS GOD.

[Jesus Christ] is the "place" in whom God in all his fullness was pleased to take up his residence. All the attributes and activities of God - his spirit, word, wisdom, and glory - are perfectly displayed in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

"To insure that no one would miss his intention, Paul qualifies this noun with 'all,' that is, 'all [not just some of] the fullness.'"<sup>3</sup> Everything Jesus is in His essence corresponds exactly to who God is in His essence. **There is neither deviation nor deficiency in Christ.** The intent of the biblical author is clear, "The totality of the divine essence dwells permanently in Jesus."<sup>4</sup>

Colossians 3:11 continues this line of thought when it says, "Christ is all, and in all."

A renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, **but Christ is all, and in all.** (Col. 3:11)

New Testament scholar Peter O'Brien provides us with the following insightful comment:

*Christ, Our Identity*

## *Does It Work?*

The first half ["Christ is all"] states in an emphatic way that Christ is "absolutely everything," or "all that matters," while the words he is "in all" . . . means that he permeates and indwells all members of [the body equally].<sup>5</sup>

It is because Jesus Christ "is all, and in all" that Jeremiah Burroughs, in commenting on this verse, can make the following observation:

It is Christ that is instead of all, that is better than all, and that will supply all in His due time. Is Christ all in all? Then if we have an interest in Him, it should satisfy and content us though we have nothing or though we are nothing. Why? Because if we have Christ we have all.<sup>6</sup>

We do well also to note John 1:1, 14; Colossians 1:15; and Hebrews 1:3.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of **the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth**. (John 1:1, 14)

**He is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of all creation. (Col. 1:15)

And **He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature** . . . (Heb. 1:3)

## *Christ, Our Identity*

*Does It Work?*

Whatever God is, Jesus is. God's expansive and infinite nature is not easily grasped by imperfect and finite minds. It is for this reason Paul wrote the following:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How **unsearchable** are His judgments and **unfathomable** His ways! (Rom. 11:33)

This immeasurableness "means not only that God is unlimited, but that he is unlimitable."<sup>7</sup> Truly, He is

TO ALL BELIEVERS AT ALL TIMES IN ALL PLACES, JESUS IS ENOUGH.
--

immeasurable in His nature. The immeasurable-ness of His nature assures us of His complete sufficiency. To all believers at all times in all places, Jesus is enough. God can do what He promises because of who He is.

When my family and I lived in Detroit, Michigan, there was an ice cream parlor run by a local dairy farm. A single scoop of ice cream was so enormous that if you put it on a cone you would have it running down your arm. Friend, that is excessive.

At the end of the day when the dust settles and we are all alone, and we ask ourselves, "Does it work?" let us remember that He is immeasurable in His nature. Because His nature is immeasurable, He keeps His promises. Nothing more can be added. The truth of His nature sustains us in our storms and fills us with

## *Does It Work?*

contentment when everything around us would demand otherwise.

A second area that reveals the immeasurable character of His sufficiency is His Redemption.



### **He is Immeasurable in His Redemption (John 19:30).**

What is redemption? To redeem means to buy back. Redemption presupposes debt and obligation. Our study concerns the buying back of sinners from sin's debt by paying off the unanswerable obligation man has before God. Because of who Christ is in His sacrifice, He completely satisfies the Father's demands.

I glorified You on the earth, **having accomplished the work** which You have given Me to do. (John 17:4)

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "**It is finished!**" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. (John 19:30)

The word *finish* means, "to make an end." The complete finality of His action consumed the demand. "Everything that God commissioned Jesus to do has been 'completed,' the saving work whose earthly completion according to John is at the cross."<sup>8</sup> Consider the deficiency of each one of us as we stand in contrast to who God is. Between God and man there existed . . .



## *Does It Work?*

- A debt we could not pay
- A conflict we could not reconcile
- A wrath we could not appease
- A failure we could not correct

Christ came, and because of His person and His work, He completely satisfied the Father's demands. He said, "It is finished." "Jesus died with a shout of triumph on his lips. He did not say, 'It is finished,' in weary defeat; he said it as one who shouts for joy because the victory is won."<sup>9</sup> Jesus Christ brought to an end the debt, the conflict, the wrath, and the failure.

JESUS CHRIST BROUGHT TO AN END THE DEBT, THE CONFLICT, THE WRATH, AND THE FAILURE.
--

- Jesus Christ paid the debt (redemption)
- Jesus Christ reconciled the conflict (reconciliation)
- Jesus Christ appeased the wrath (propitiation)
- Jesus Christ corrected the failure (justification)

The Scripture speaks of our Lord **sitting** in heaven. He sits because He has completed His redemptive work (Col. 3:1; Heb. 10:12; 12:2).

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, **seated at the right hand of God.** (Col. 3:1)

But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, **sat down at the right hand of God.** (Heb. 10:12)

*Christ, Our Identity*

## *Does It Work?*

. . . fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and **has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** (Heb. 12:2)

He sat down. The one piece of furniture absent from the Old Testament Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple was the chair because the priest could never rest. "The posture indicated an interminable ministry. The seating of the Savior, on the other hand, indicates the completion of His task (1:3, 13)."<sup>10</sup>

"The last sentence [in John 19:30] makes the thing even clearer ["And He bowed His head"]. John says that Jesus leaned back his head and gave up his spirit. John uses the word that could be used for settling back upon a pillow. For Jesus the strife was over and the battle was won; and even on the Cross he knew the joy of victory and the rest of the man who has completed his task and can lean back, content and at peace."<sup>11</sup> **Christ completely satisfies the deficiency of the people.** "The sinner can now be assured that he will not again be confronted with the evidence of guilt. In Christ atonement has been completed."<sup>12</sup>

Surely if Christ is an object sufficient for the satisfaction of the Father, much more, then, is He an object sufficient for the satisfaction of any soul.<sup>13</sup>

Truly, He is immeasurable in His redemption. The

*Christ, Our Identity*

## *Does It Work?*

immeasurableness of His redemptive work assures us of His complete sufficiency. To all believers at all times in all places, Jesus is enough.

God can do what He promises because of who He is and what He did. The redemptive work of Jesus Christ is so immeasurable that it removes every debt against us. Imagine going out to eat, preparing to pay the bill, and finding that someone already paid it. Friend, Jesus Christ paid the bill of sin against you in full; not only that, but He also left the tip! There is nothing more to do but to enjoy the gift.

At the end of the day when the dust settles and we are all alone, and we ask ourselves, “Does it work?” let us remember that He is

GOD CAN DO WHAT HE  
PROMISES BECAUSE OF  
WHO HE IS  
AND WHAT HE DID.

immeasurable in His redemption. Because His redemptive work is immeasurable, He keeps His promises. Nothing more can be added. Because His redemptive work is immeasurable, His people can bend their knees in humility and gratitude in the face of insurmountable adversity.

This leads us to a final area revealing the immeasurable character of His sufficiency.



**He is Immeasurable in His Grace (Eph. 1:7; 2:7; 3:8, 16).**

## *Does It Work?*

What is grace? Grace is God acting for the benefit of His people with no apparent reason or motivation on the part of the recipient. The meaning of grace demands that nothing on the part of the recipient caused the action. The blessings of God on the people of God are grace-based. This outpouring of grace is proportionate to His person. The resources exceed the need. There are four verses in the book of Ephesians celebrating this idea:

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to **the riches of His grace**. (Eph. 1:7)

So that in the ages to come He might show **the surpassing riches of His grace** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:7)

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles **the unfathomable riches of Christ**. (Eph. 3:8)

That He would grant you, according to **the riches of His glory**, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. (Eph. 3:16)

There is a parallelism throughout these passages. The riches of His glory, the riches of His grace, and the riches of Christ are working in tandem. They are interwoven equally so that each is expressive of the other.

His grace is as immeasurable as the person of Jesus Christ. "The unsearchable riches of Christ, are the

fullness of the Godhead, the plenitude of all divine glories and perfections which dwell in him; the fullness of grace to pardon, to sanctify and save; everything in short, which renders him **the satisfying portion of the soul.**"<sup>14</sup> The resources extended to sinners are immeasurable. Consider the following explanation as it seeks to unfold the richness of this language:

The favor of man toward offenders is soon exhausted, and according to its penury, it soon wearies of forgiving. But God's grace has unbounded liberality. For the opulence of His grace is seen not only in its innumerable forms and varieties of operation among men, but also in the unasked and unmerited provision of such an atonement, so perfect and glorious in its relation to God and man, as the blood of the "Beloved One."<sup>15</sup>

If Christ can fail, so also can His grace. How lavish is the sufficiency of Jesus Christ? Is He only adequate? Does He just barely meet the need? Friend, the grace of Jesus Christ swallows up the need to such a degree that no residue of its previous existence remains. That is how excessive His grace is. Jesus Christ is always profusely sufficient. Notice the progression of thought. Paul uses the word *riches*, then *surpassing*, and finally *unsearchable*. The depth of His richness is "*untrackable.*"<sup>16</sup> There is an excessive, lavish, extreme, acute, and intense element to the grace of God. "The

*Does It Work?*

comprehension of its limits and the exhaustion of its contents are alike impossible.”<sup>17</sup> Charles Hodge correctly notes how this revelation of grace “is the overflowing abundance of unmerited love inexhaustible in God and freely accessible through Christ.”<sup>18</sup> Everything we have is a result of His grace.

Truly, He is immeasurable in His grace. The immeasurableness of His grace assures me of His complete sufficiency. To all believers at all times in all places, Jesus is enough.

God can do what He promises because of how He acts. Because He is gracious, He loves without condition, He accepts without requirement, He forgives without limit, He favors without merit, and He serves without reward.

GOD CAN DO WHAT HE PROMISES BECAUSE OF HOW HE ACTS.
--

When I drive I typically put on the cruise control because I have a tendency to speed. One day when driving home from work, I failed to do so. Just before I got home, a police officer pulled me over. Now, when this happens it causes a very sickening feeling because it usually means I am about to lose money. As I scrambled to get my wallet and car registration, he pointed out how fast I was going. I assured him there was no question I was speeding. He then said, “I allow ten over, but you were going pretty fast.” I gulped, and then he said, “I just want you to slow down.” I

## *Does It Work?*

was unnerved, but very glad. **The grace of God is like that. When you expect and deserve the worst, He gives you His best.**

Perhaps today, our feelings are betraying us. We feel awful and our thinking is confused. Let us be assured, God is not looking to “get us.” He understands, and all of His dealings with us flow from the abundance of His resources.<sup>19</sup> He deals with us according to His grace.

At the end of the day when the dust settles and we are all alone asking ourselves, “Does it work?” let us remember that He is immeasurable in His grace. Because His grace is immeasurable, He keeps His promises. Nothing more can be added.



### **Making the Transfer**

Perhaps this past month, week, or day, you asked yourself the question, “Does it work?” Perhaps today you are thinking that Christ and His promises are not meeting your expectations and now you are ready to return the purchase. Perhaps today you are ready to walk out because you have come to the place where you believe that Jesus simply does not work. Perhaps today your frustration level is so high and your depression is so deep that you simply do not see a way out.

HE IS ALL WE WILL EVER  
NEED ... IN FACT, HE IS  
MORE THAN WE WILL  
EVER NEED;  
HE IS ENOUGH.

*Does It Work?*

Friend, you are not alone, unloved, or rejected. Jesus Christ holds you in the palm of His hand (John 10:27, 28). Romans 8:31-35 declares that Christ is for you.

<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; <sup>28</sup> and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:27, 28)

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup> who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom. 8:31-35)

Jesus Christ is immeasurable in His nature, His redemption and His grace.

Because He is immeasurable, He is

sufficient. He is **all** you will ever need. In fact, He is **more** than you will ever need; He is enough. Today, may you see Him as your sufficiency.

JESUS CHRIST IS IMMEASURABLE IN HIS NATURE, HIS REDEMPTION, AND HIS GRACE.
--

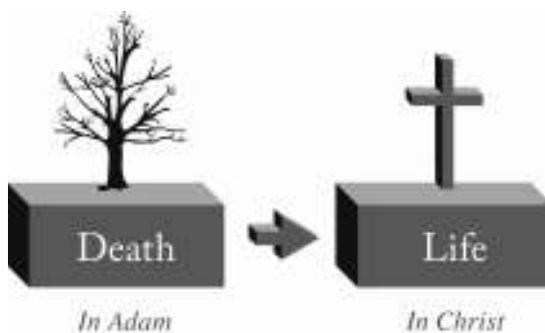


# Christ, Our Identity

For you have died and **your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

**When Christ, who is our life,** is revealed,  
then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

(Colossians 3:3, 4)



Woven into our makeup are certain questions that we seek to answer. We all wonder at times, who we are, why we are here, and where we are heading. In the midst of these questions and in light of creation's vastness, how are we to see ourselves?<sup>20</sup>

In today's world, we commonly use such terms as *self-esteem* and *self-image*. Our evaluation of who we are is our *self-esteem*. Our perception of self wraps around us as a security blanket. **However, although we have an opinion of who we are, our perception of who we are is often very deceptive, greatly erratic, and possibly**

**dangerous.** For some of us, these blankets of self-esteem are threadbare and moth-eaten. What people think and say consumes our sense of security. We are fearful and anxious. We do not see ourselves as being loved, accepted, or forgiven. Our sense of self becomes an enemy. Yet how do we battle an enemy that is of our own making?

Consider the conclusion of a man who had everything life could offer. The author of Ecclesiastes experienced all that life contained and concluded that life is empty apart from God.

<sup>8</sup> Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men — many concubines. <sup>9</sup> Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. <sup>10</sup> All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. <sup>11</sup> Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and **behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.** (Eccl. 2:8-11)

A French philosopher noted how, “Life is an empty bubble on the sea of nothingness.”<sup>21</sup> This statement is true if it is lived in the absence of Jesus Christ. “All the created power in heaven and earth cannot bring peace to a troubled soul.”<sup>22</sup> Life is empty if lived apart from the soul satisfying power of Jesus Christ.

The key to resting in the difficulty is to understand that we are who He is before the Father. The four truths that form the basis of this study enable us to move

THE KEY TO RESTING  
IN THE PERCEIVED  
DIFFICULTY IS BY  
SEEING THAT WE ARE  
WHO HE IS BEFORE  
THE FATHER.

from what we know in our difficulty to a place of rest:

- First, Christ our Sufficiency - He is all we need and will one day be all we want.
- Second, Christ our Identity - We are who He is before the Father.
- Third, Christ our Victory - Our life is the outworking of His perfect plan.
- Fourth, Christ our Glory - He is our boast.

These four truths can **move us from existing in defeat to living in rest**. In this chapter, we will examine the topic, "Christ, Our Identity."

In the study that follows, to understand is to see how the various principles fit into a seamless whole. Each of the subsequent parts *must* be seen as fitting into a seamless whole. My intent is for us to see what is already true. To know Christ and the power of His resurrection is to live in the abundance of God's provision. **It is His joy for us to experience our joy in Him. Nothing we do can undo what He has done. In Him, nothing can be added and in Him, nothing can be subtracted.** Thus, "Christian growth is simply

accepting what we have always been from the first day we accepted Christ.”<sup>23</sup> Michael Wells correctly notes that as Christians we must “remember that Christian growth is merely accepting what you have always had from the first day you gave your life to Christ.”<sup>24</sup> Everything you are about to read is already true. The goal is to rest in Him.

There are eight principles guiding us in appropriating the truth of our identity in Christ. Each is sequential and progressive. Each one builds on the previous ideas. We will begin by looking at Galatians 2:20.



**We must understand what we were in Adam we no longer are but still have (Gal. 2:20).**

**I have been crucified with Christ;** and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal. 2:20)

It is essential we see who we are in Him, and that we are who He is before the Father. Before salvation, our identity is “**in Adam.**” “Paul declares the ‘I’ to be dead. The ‘I’ belongs to the sinful ‘flesh with its passions and desires’ (5:24), and thus ‘the world.’”<sup>25</sup> After salvation, our identity is “**in Christ.**” As believers, we are no longer identified as being “in Adam” but rather “in Christ,” although we still have an Adamic sin nature. **What we once were, we no longer are, but still have.** “The person we formerly were was crucified with him. The figure [of crucifixion] is deliberately bold,

designed to emphasize the finality of the death which has put an end to the old order and interposed a barrier between it and the new life in Christ.”<sup>26</sup> Yet we still sin. That sin, however, is part of the Adamic nature that is still present. Nevertheless, we are not identified by it. Our identity is Christ. We are *Christians*.

This brings us to our second guiding principle.



### **We must understand what we were in Adam is crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:1-11).**

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> May it never be! How shall **we who died to sin** still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that all of us **who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?** <sup>4</sup> Therefore **we have been buried with Him through baptism into death**, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> **For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,** <sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our **old self was crucified with Him**, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; <sup>7</sup> for **he who has died** is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if **we have died with Christ**, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. <sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. <sup>11</sup> **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.** (Rom. 6:1-11)

## *Does It Work?*

In His crucifixion, we died, and in His burial, we were buried.

The death of Christ simply means for me that when He died I died, and in God's view I am now as if I had been executed for my own sin and was now recognized as another person who has risen with Christ and is justified from his former sins because he has been executed for them.<sup>27</sup>

This is no less real than what we were in Adam. In Adam, we were dead to God, but now, in Christ, we are dead to sin. What we once were in Adam has been crucified with Christ. Thus, we no longer are identified as "in Adam," although we still have an Adamic nature. "Positional death to sin means that God continues to consider each Christian dead to sin. The believer's death to sin with Christ [however] is not an experiential death to sin."<sup>28</sup> Consequently, we still sin.

I am legally and ethically involved. I have been sentenced to death in Christ. It is my *judicial* position. Christ's death *for* sin is automatically my death *to* sin.<sup>29</sup>

When referring to the Christian's position in Christ, terms like *judicial* and *legal* are used. The word *judicial* is a legal term. It is a word of substance and weight. For example, when a court of law declares

a person “not guilty,” no matter what else might happen that person is not guilty of the charges initially brought against him. Even if he were actually guilty of the crime, he would be declared innocent because of the judicial declaration. Thus, the idea of *judicial* or *positional truth* has real weight behind it. Because we have been crucified with Christ, “God expects nothing of self but that it is crucified, which judicially it already is.”<sup>30</sup> Although we still have a fallen nature, because of our co-crucifixion with Christ, it is dead. We are to believe this by faith.

This also brings us to our third guiding principle.



**We must understand we have been raised with Christ (Col. 2:20-3:1).**

<sup>20</sup> If **you have died with Christ** to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, <sup>21</sup> ‘Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!’ <sup>22</sup> (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) — in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? <sup>23</sup> These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence (Col. 2:20-23).

Therefore if **you have been raised up with Christ**, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1).

Our resurrection with Christ is no less real than our death and burial. The language of Scripture is certain. If we are saved, then we are raised. "Paul has an 'if' of reality just as in 2:20; 'if you were jointly raised with Christ' is the counterpart of 'if you died together with Christ.'"<sup>31</sup> This has no bearing on whether or not we feel it. In the court of law when the accused is charged with a crime and then declared "not guilty," regardless as to how he feels, he is "not guilty" in the sentencing of the court. Usually, the judicial declaration results in much emotion. Yet one's feelings do not determine the validity or genuineness of the sentencing.

FAILURE TO  
APPROPRIATE OR  
UNDERSTAND  
CANNOT MAKE FALSE  
WHAT IS TRUE.

It is unfortunate, but many Christians live their entire lives based on how they **feel** and not on what is true.

Although there can be much emotion in the Christian life, the foundation of such a life is rooted in immutable and incontrovertible truths. **We cannot undo by our unbelief what God has done.** Failure to appropriate or understand cannot make false what is true. F.J. Huegel correctly notes, "If [we] fail to reign, [we] are simply not exercising [our] rights. The reckoning does not produce the fact; it simply springs from the fact."<sup>32</sup>

This brings us to our fourth guiding principle:



**We must understand we are now seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5, 6).**



## *Does It Work?*

<sup>5</sup>Even when we were dead in our transgressions, **[God] made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and **raised us up with Him**, and **seated us with Him** in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5, 6).

Our position with Christ right now is no less real than our own resurrection. We are seated with Christ. His work is finished and our rest is a consequence of this work. "The Greek verb behind *seated* is in the aorist tense and emphasizes the absoluteness of this promise by speaking of it as if it had already fully taken place."<sup>33</sup> "He (God) made us sit down with (Christ) in heaven."<sup>34</sup> Life with all of its twists and turns cannot negate what is true. We are seated with Him in the heavenly places right now.

Abundant life is not something to work for, but rather is something [already] given to be worked from. My acceptance is not based on what I do but rather on what I am.<sup>35</sup>

Our life now flows in a steady stream from the throne of God.

This brings us to our fifth guiding principle.



**We must understand our life is now hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).**

**For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:3)**

*Christ, Our Identity*

*Does It Work?*

Unless we can bring to God a perfect righteousness, we are undone forever.<sup>36</sup>

Our life must be hidden with Christ in God or all is lost. The means by which this truth becomes a reality are found in the Holy Spirit baptizing the New Testament believer into the

OUR LIFE MUST BE HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD OR ALL IS LOST.
---

very body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). Our union with Him is so complete that our Lord could say to Saul in the persecution of His people, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4).

A few years back, a commonly used expression was WWJD (i.e., "What would Jesus do?"). Though the thought is positive, an undercurrent exists that is deadly. It becomes easy to fall into the false thinking that, "We conceive of the Christian life as an imitation of Christ. It is not, however, an imitation of Christ, it is a participation in Christ. The Christian life is not a life of imitation."<sup>37</sup> Our death, burial, and resurrection are so absolute, so complete, that our lives are now hidden with Christ in God. Grammatically, the tense is perfect, thus viewing "the completed state arising from a past action."<sup>38</sup> Everything about us is swallowed up by Him and seen through Him.

He is our identity. This brings us to our sixth guiding principle.

*Christ, Our Identity*



**We must understand Christ is our life (Col. 3:4; Gal. 2:20).**

**When Christ, who is our life**, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. (Col. 3:4)

**I have been crucified with Christ**; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal. 2:20)

Only Christ is capable of living the Christian life, for the very obvious and simple reason that He is the Christian life. Christianity is *Christ*. The Christian life is nothing less than the life which He lived then ... lived *now* by Him in *you*.<sup>39</sup>

So complete has become Paul's identification with Christ that his separate personality is merged into that of Christ. This language helps one to understand the victorious cry in Romans 7:25. It is the union of the vine and the branch (John 15:1-6).<sup>40</sup>

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Branches have no life independent from the vine. Branches "live and move and have their being" by the life of the vine. Branches never produce fruit; branches bear the fruit produced by the life of the vine through them. In seeking to understand this idea, let us consider the following word picture:

*Christ, Our Identity*

## *Does It Work?*

I can illustrate by taking [a] beautiful new white shirt and dipping or immersing it in this pan of red dye. And when I pull it out of the pan of red dye it is no longer identified as the white shirt. It is no longer a white shirt. It has a completely new identity. It has changed its identity. It is the red shirt. The believer took on a new identity when he was baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. Our identity was changed by our union with Christ. We are now identified as Christians. We are members of Christ. We are no longer in Adam. We have a new family with new identity. Christ is the head of our new family.<sup>41</sup>

We are no longer identified by our old “in Adam” position. We are now known by our new “in Christ” position. Everything about us is now about Him. He is our life.

This brings us to our seventh guiding principle.



**We must understand God the Father now sees us in the real righteousness of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:17; 1 Cor. 1:30).**

By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so also are we in this world.** (1 John 4:17)

*Christ, Our Identity*

## *Does It Work?*

**But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. (1 Cor. 1:30)**

The notable Bible teacher H.A. Ironside in commenting on 1 John 4:17 made the following observation:

Here is one of the most profound truths of Holy Scripture, and it is all embodied in nine monosyllables, and only three out of the nine have more than two letters. 'As He is, so are we in this world.'<sup>42</sup>

If the imputed damnation of Adam is real for those who are lost, then the imputed righteousness of Christ is also real for those who are saved. If we have His righteousness, then our righteousness is of no consequence. Just as in Adam we were given the consequences of the Fall, so also in Christ we have been given the consequences of the cross. Because our identity and position is in Christ, the Father sees us in His Son. "Even while remaining in this world, we are already like him. We are sons in and through the Son, begotten or born of God as he was (5:18), the objects of God's love and favor like him (cf. Eph. 1:6). Therefore if Jesus called and calls God 'Father', so may we. We can share the confidence before God which he enjoys."<sup>43</sup> "Our justification is not made up by what we have done or all that we can possibly do."<sup>44</sup> Our justification (right standing before the Father) is made up by what He has done and continues to do. **He is our wisdom. He is our righteousness. He is our**

*Christ, Our Identity*

sanctification. **He is** our redemption. **He is, He is, He is!** This is not about us, but always about Him. It is impossible for anyone at any time to bring any charge against the people of God as they are clothed in the real and incorruptible righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:33).

**HE IS OUR WISDOM.  
HE IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.  
HE IS OUR SANCTIFICATION.  
HE IS OUR REDEMPTION.  
HE IS, HE IS, HE IS!**

This brings us to our eighth guiding principle.



**We must understand that who we are in Christ is who He is before the Father.**

For whatever reason, we feel compelled to unite what we have in Adam and who we are in Christ, thinking it is how the Father now sees us. If we are seen by the Father in any way other than in Christ, we are lost and condemned. For us to be acceptable before the Father, we must have the very righteousness of Christ.

**OUR IDENTITY  
DOES NOT  
CONSIST IN  
WHAT WE DO,  
BUT IN  
WHO WE ARE IN  
CHRIST.**

Today we might ask, "Who are we?" We respond by saying

- We are accepted in the Beloved
- We are beloved sons
- We are well-pleasing before the Father

## Does It Work?

- We are loved without condition
- We are accepted without requirement
- We are forgiven without limit

**Our identity does not consist in what we do, but in who we are in Christ.**



### **Making the Transfer**

There is a very subtle danger in seeking to live this truth. In a quest to serve Christ, it is possible to work in one's own strength and overlook the life of Christ in and through His people. Listen carefully to what Pastor Chuck Swindoll calls *heresy*. "What seems so right is, in fact, heresy – the one I consider the most dangerous heresy on earth. What is it? *The emphasis on what we do for God, instead of what God does for us.*"<sup>45</sup> He continues, "Why not emphasize how much I do for God instead of what He does for me? Because that is heresy, plain and simple. How? **By exalting my own effort and striving for my own accomplishments, I insult His grace and steal the credit that belongs to Him alone.**"<sup>46</sup>

Listen to what Bob George calls "an affront to the cross!"

We reason that now that we are in Christ, it's up to us to walk the straight and narrow and to name our sins one by one. What an affront to the cross!<sup>47</sup>

*Does It Work?*

Our error is thinking we are something other than what we are in Christ. Friend, if you are saved by grace alone, why do you now believe it is up to you to get the job finished? This is Paul's point in Galatians 3:3.

FRIEND, IF YOU ARE  
SAVED BY GRACE ALONE,  
WHY DO YOU NOW  
BELIEVE IT IS UP TO YOU  
TO GET THE JOB  
FINISHED?

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal. 3:3)

This is why our minds, our thinking, must be renewed (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). We must learn these truths and start thinking in a new way. Christ is sufficient. Learning to rest in the difficulties of life is to see that we are who He is before the Father. Do not be satisfied with anything apart from Christ.

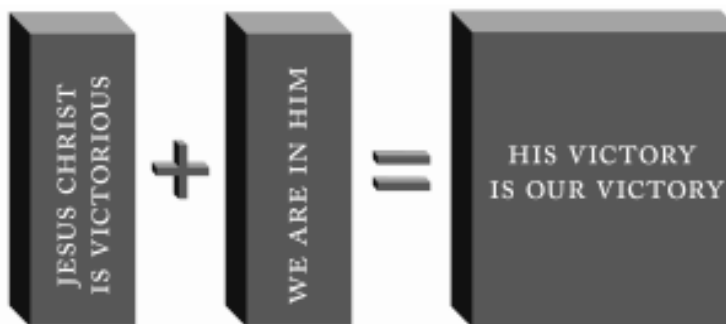
How do we battle an enemy that is frequently of our own making? The battle is won by seeing Him. Perhaps today, it would please the Father to show us who we are in His Son and what His Son is for us — perhaps today.



3

## Christ, Our Victory

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;  
**but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our  
Lord Jesus Christ** (1 Corinthians 15:56, 57)



Throughout this study, we are asking ourselves an honest question, a question that makes us vulnerable. The question is this: “What if it doesn’t work?” We are taught that Christianity should work and we believe it does, but our experiences seem to suggest otherwise. What are we to do when we are left with feelings of hopelessness and helplessness? Our response to such questioning is four-fold:

- First, Christ our Sufficiency – He is all we need and will one day be all we want.

*Does It Work?*

- Second, Christ our Identity – We are who He is before the Father.
- Third, Christ our Victory – Our life is the outworking of His perfect plan.
- Fourth, Christ our Glory – He is our boast.

This four-fold foundation enables us to build a life of rest even when our experiences shout otherwise. These four truths form a foundation that can make the difference between our struggling with defeat or that of living with rest. To live with rest is to live in His victory.

LEARNING TO LIVE  
THE VICTORIOUS  
CHRISTIAN LIFE IS  
TO SEE HIS LIFE AS  
OURS.

Learning to live the victorious Christian life is to see His life as ours. “The foundation for victory over sin is the Christian’s death with Christ to sin. Burial with Christ reemphasizes that we have ended our pre-conversion life in sin. Resurrection with Christ introduces the Christian to a new life in righteousness.”<sup>1</sup> We can rest in any perceived difficulty by seeing that His victory is our victory regardless of our experience. Michael Wells correctly captures this idea with the following thought: “I am not saying that we work to change what we are, but work to believe what we already are.”<sup>2</sup>

Almost without exception, most Christians have heard of the theology of living the victorious Christian life. Such an idea paints a picture of those who enter into some kind of spiritual maturity where fighting,

*Christ, Our Victory*

## *Does It Work?*

fatigue, and failure are past. The victorious Christian is one who has learned to enter into His rest, one whose life is marked by “victory” and not “defeat.”

Yet, what is a theology of the victorious life? It is unfortunate, but our culture feeds incorrect thinking as it relates to a life of victory. Our pragmatic mindset pushes us to ask inappropriate questions such as, “Does it work?” and “What’s in it for us?” Such thinking refuses to accept anything other than our own subjective, man-centered, and self-fabricated image of ease, comfort, happiness, and emotional euphoria. Any attempt to define the victorious Christian life by anything less than the person and work of Jesus Christ is bound for bondage and formed for failure.

The question most often asked about the victorious Christian life is, “How do I get it?” That question presupposes deficiency and absence. It assumes we must address and correct something that is lacking. If we have to find it, we do not have it. If it is experienced in a moment, then most of the time we are *not* in that moment.

The Church of God, without discernment, seems to be swallowing such an ideology “hook, line, and sinker.” Regrettably, this falsehood is widely embraced within Evangelical circles. It is an error often planted in the hearts of God’s people that will rob them of “the freedom that Christ set us free” (Gal. 5:1).

*Christ, Our Victory*

What is the error in their definition of the victorious Christian life? As with most error, there is an element of truth. The difference between what the Scripture teaches and what the error proposes is not only in the outcome, but also in the journey. Though there is much good, the error is strong enough to lead the undiscerning back into the bondage of a performance-based acceptance, a merited love, a conditional forgiveness, and an unstable fellowship.

Such error makes a sharp distinction between who Christ is and who we are. Yet, such a dichotomy does not exist when we properly understand Scripture. In this study, we will note how **His victory is our victory**. We will begin by noting the victory that is already secured by Jesus Christ.



### **Jesus Christ is Victorious.**

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; **I have overcome the world.** (John 16:33)

Notice the context of this verse.

- The devil enters into Judas (John 13:1-4)
- The disciples are going to betray Him (John 13:21-27)
- Peter's denial is announced (John 13:36-38)

The tone is gloomy. He reiterates this darkness in 16:32, where the impending betrayal by His disciples is stated. Jesus assures the disciples of their inevitable

failure. They will forsake Him. They will abandon Him to His enemies. Nevertheless, it is in this context He gives the verse quoted above (v. 33).

Something completely foreign is introduced. It is brought in unexpectedly and suddenly. No one anticipated the overture of "peace." Notice how this peace is qualified. Our peace is found **in Him**.<sup>3</sup> He foretells of conflict, heartache, failure, tribulation, and depression, but then He adds the word "*but*." The "*but*" says, "Though all this is true, take courage! Despite the enormity of the burden confronting you, be of good cheer!" In every one of its occurrences, the backdrop against which this exhortation is laid is dark and foreboding (Matt. 9:2, 22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; 10:49; Luke 8:48; John 16:33; Acts 23:11). "He predicted their desertion in the very saying in which he assured them of the peace he would give them. He loved them for what they were and despite their shortcomings."<sup>4</sup>

But why are we to take courage and be of good cheer in the midst of our crushing circumstances? Friend,

THE EXHORTATION TO TAKE HEART IS NOT BASED ON HOW WE FEEL, BUT ON WHO HE IS FOR US AND WHO WE ARE IN HIM.

the exhortation to take heart is not based on how we feel, but on who He is for us and who we are in Him. **Take courage.** Why? "**Because I have overcome the world! I am victorious!**"

Consider the word *overcome*.<sup>5</sup> *Overcome* speaks of a

*Does It Work?*

completed action, but the results of it continue to this day. All that needs to be done has been done. He is reigning. He is victorious.

Leon Morris correctly notes how, “[t]his statement, spoken as it is in the shadow of the cross, is audacious. The cross would seem to the outsider to be Jesus’ total defeat. He sees it as his complete victory over all that the world is and can do to him. He goes to the cross not in fear or in gloom, but as a conqueror.”<sup>6</sup> The expression of that reign in time will be fuller, but not the quality of it. His victory in behalf of His people is always present. His people are to appropriate it by faith.

If they fail to reign, they are simply not exercising their rights. The reckoning does not produce the fact; it simply springs from the fact.<sup>7</sup>

New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce provides us with this insightful observation:

The peace which his people have in him is not only the peace which he gives (cf. John 14:27); it is the peace which he himself enjoys and which he shares with them. The world which inflicts tribulation on them is his enemy as well as theirs (cf. John 15:18-25). But it is a beaten enemy: the cross which the Lord in spirit has already embraced marked his

*Christ, Our Victory*

triumph and the world's downfall. **His triumph, like his peace, is shared by his people. It is this faith that unites his people to him, so that his victory becomes theirs also.**<sup>8</sup>

His comments form a fitting introduction to our second thought.



**By our union with Him, all that He is, is ours by right.**

This is perhaps one of the hardest truths to embrace and realize. Read carefully the following verses. Can you hear the triumph of our union with Him?

<sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that all of **us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus** have been baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore **we have been buried with Him** through baptism into death, <sup>5</sup> For if **we have become united with Him** in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, <sup>6</sup> knowing this, that **our old self was crucified with Him,** <sup>8</sup> Now if **we have died with Christ,** we believe that **we shall also live with Him** (Rom. 6:3-6, 8).

. . . and if children, heirs also, **heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,** if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17).

**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me (Gal. 2:20).

## *Does It Work?*

<sup>3</sup>For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (Col. 3:3, 4).

William R. Newell uses the word *federal* to speak of the believer's union with Christ and cites the aforementioned verses to prove his point.<sup>9</sup> His point is straightforward, "Let us never forget, that this crucifixion was a thing **definitely done by God at the cross**, just as really as our sins were there laid upon Christ."<sup>10</sup>

Biblical theologian Robert L. Reymond makes this necessary explanation as to the reality of this union:

The bond of that union is of and by the Holy Spirit himself and thus apprehended by the human intelligence only in the Word/faith construct, its reality might be doubted. But the Scriptures make it clear that, though it is spiritual and mystical, **this nonmaterial union with Christ is as real as though there were in fact a literal umbilical cord uniting them, reaching "all the way" from Christ in heaven to the believer on earth.**<sup>11</sup>

The believer does not have two lives, his own and Christ's. His life *is* our life. This is not an arrogant or presumptuous statement. It is a true statement. We make no boast of being able to secure for ourselves all that is now ours. We did not do it; He did. We simply

*Christ, Our Victory*



*Does It Work?*

believe that what He has done and is doing is enough. Now, because this is true, His victory is our victory.

HIS LIFE  
IS OUR LIFE.  
NOW, BECAUSE  
THIS IS TRUE,  
HIS VICTORY  
IS OUR VICTORY.

When the sinner believes and is saved **he does not create the fact, he simply rests in the fact** established since the foundation of the world when, as we read in Revelation, the Lamb of God was slain. Calvary was the visible expression of a fact already established by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.<sup>12</sup>

We must give “constant attention to God’s exact statements of fact. Satan’s great device is to drive earnest souls back to beseeching God for what God says has already been done!”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, “to the degree that the Christian takes seriously the reality of his Spirit – wrought union with Christ, to that degree he will find his definitive sanctification coming to actual expression in his experiential or progressive sanctification. The holiness of the Christian’s daily walk directly depends upon his union with the Savior.”<sup>14</sup>

This brings us to our third thought.



**His victory is our victory.**

*Christ, Our Victory*

*Does It Work?*

There is no victory apart from His victory. **Herein is the tragic misunderstanding as to what constitutes victory. What we want is an experience different from the one we have.** Yet, we should see our experience as His victory.

By the resurrection, God proclaimed His Son Victor over the whole realm of darkness, and the ground Christ won He has given to us . . . For our part we need not struggle to occupy ground that is already ours. In Christ we are conquerors. In Him, therefore we stand. **Thus today we do not fight for victory; we fight from victory.** We do not fight in order to win but because in Christ we have already won. Overcomers are those who rest in the victory already given to them by their God.<sup>15</sup>

Because victory is His, therefore it is ours . . . We must not ask the Lord to enable us to overcome the enemy, nor even look to Him to overcome, but praise Him because He has already done so - He is Victor. It is all a matter of faith in Him. If we believe the Lord, we shall not pray so much but rather we shall praise Him more.<sup>16</sup>

Consider the context of Romans 8:37. The chapter is one of tremendous victory.

<sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or

## *Does It Work?*

nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> Just as it is written, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup> **But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us** (Rom. 8:35-37).

This truth soothes the troubled soul. First, notice verse 37. Then notice verses 35 and 36. What is the tone? Verse 37 begins with the same contrasting word as noted in John 16:33, "but." Despite these things, **we overwhelmingly conquer**. How? Through Him who loved us. "This is the transcendent factor which contradicts all appearance and turns apparent defeat into victory."<sup>17</sup> All victory flows from His victory.

The word translated *overwhelmingly conquer* means "to vanquish beyond, to gain a decisive victory, to be more than a conqueror." It is a rare word used by Paul "for the warrior whom no earthly affliction or defeat perturbs."<sup>18</sup> It is the same root word used of our Lord in John 16:33, but this word is on steroids! "Appearance to the contrary places the reality and completeness of the victory in bolder relief."<sup>19</sup> Verses 38 and 39 tell us how we can be this despite our emotional fallout and circumstantial troubles. We conquer by knowing, "NO MATTER WHAT, JESUS LOVES ME THIS I KNOW." No matter how badly we fail, nothing can change His opinion of us or dealings with us. He loves us, not because of our performance, but because of our position. Glory, Hallelujah!

Let us also consider 2 Corinthians 2:12-14.

*Christ, Our Victory*

## *Does It Work?*

<sup>12</sup> Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, <sup>13</sup> I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia. <sup>14</sup> **But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ,** and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place (2 Cor. 2:12-14).

Again, observe the context of verse 14. Jesus Christ is always leading us in triumph. This is habitual and continuous. Notice this triumphal procession is found **“in Him.”** He is manifesting in us and through us His fragrance. We are a fragrance of Christ to God. To the unbeliever we represent their judgment, and to the believer we smell of life. Think about the concluding comment, “Who is adequate for these things?” Not us, **BUT CHRIST!** Consider also 1 Corinthians 15:56, 57:

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; <sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, **who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ** (1 Cor. 15:56, 57).

Again, notice the context of verse 57 and then verse 56. We would be overwhelmed by the sting of death and the power of sin, **BUT FOR GOD.** **DESPITE** sin and the Law, we give thanks. Why? We are thankful because God is giving us the victory. We have this victory through and in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**DESPITE OUR  
CIRCUMSTANCES,  
SITUATION,  
EXPERIENCES,  
FEELINGS, OR  
EMOTIONS, WE ARE  
VICTORIOUS IN HIS  
VICTORY.**

*Christ, Our Victory*

## *Does It Work?*

Despite our circumstances, situations, experiences, feelings, or emotions, we are victorious in His victory.

It is interesting that God's Word never tells us to live any kind of "Christian life." If you asked Christians to describe a "victorious" Christian, would their list look like what we find in 2 Corinthians 11:25-28?

<sup>25</sup> Are they ministers of Christ? — I speak as a fool — I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup> in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; <sup>27</sup> in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— <sup>28</sup> besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:25-28).

We have victory because Jesus Christ *is* our life. He will have the victory. So the issue of living the victorious Christian life is whether or not we will embrace the idea that Jesus Christ is doing exactly what He means to do in and through our lives at every moment.



### **Making the Transfer**

*Christ, Our Victory*

## *Does It Work?*

Let us go back to 1 Corinthians 15:56 and 57. In light of these verses, let us now read verse 58.

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; <sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:56, 57).

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

Friend, grab this truth and never quit:

Grace means that in the middle of our struggle the referee blows the whistle and announces the end of the game. We are declared winners and sent to the showers. It's over for all huffing, puffing piety to earn God's favor; it's finished for all sweat-soaked straining to secure self-worth; it's the end of all competitive scrambling to get ahead of others in the game. Grace means that God is on our side and thus we are victors regardless of how well we have played the game. We might as well head for the showers and the champagne celebration.<sup>20</sup>

Listen to the words of Bob George.

Whatever your past is, thank God for it and move on. I don't need to examine Bob George's life. I know all about it. It's the story of a flawed man. Our focus on ourselves and on our

*Christ, Our Victory*

*Does It Work?*

failures takes our eyes off our perfect Redeemer and His finished work on the cross. Our weaknesses are merely daily reminders of our need to depend on Christ.<sup>21</sup>

We cannot afford to look upon our flesh and failure. Such a fixation fills us with unnecessary remorse and regret. "Regrets are for unbelievers, not for those who walk in Christ's righteousness."<sup>22</sup>

Friend, today see yourself in Him and claim His victory. Rest knowing His will is your life. "When we give Him all we are, which is nothing, He gives us all He is - everything. That is called the exchanged life. He paid a debt He did not owe, for us who owed a debt we could not pay."<sup>23</sup>

FRIEND, TODAY  
SEE YOURSELF IN  
HIM AND CLAIM  
HIS VICTORY.  
REST KNOWING  
HIS WILL IS YOUR  
LIFE.

Let us heed the following admonition by Michael Wells in *Sidetracked in the Wilderness* and L.E. Maxwell in *Born Crucified*:

If the experience never comes, still we will believe what He has spoken.<sup>24</sup>

The life that is identified with Christ will be a life of sufficiency and fullness and victory. While it must not be confused with a life of emotion or of feelings, it is a life filled with "all

*Christ, Our Victory*

*Does It Work?*

joy and peace in believing.” We must learn not to live in our feelings, for these are often misleading. The Lord Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and *the truth* shall make you free.”<sup>25</sup>

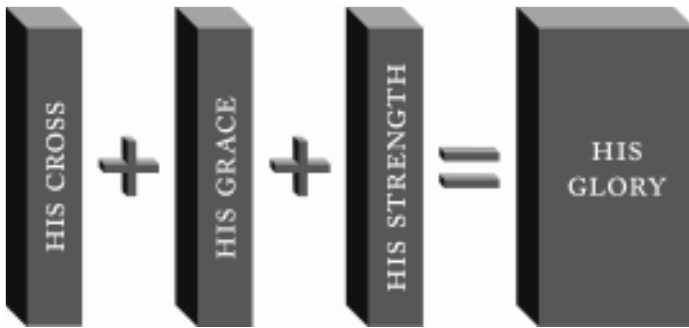
Perhaps today you say, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief” (Mark 9:23, 24). Friend, God’s design is for you to rest solely in Him. May it please Him to give you an understanding of all that He is for you and all that you are in Him.



4

# Christ, Our Glory

For I determined to know nothing among you except  
**Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.** (1 Corinthians 2:2)



We live in a day and age when self-promotion is standard fare. All of us have seen college football games where the camera pans the sidelines and all of the players are holding up a singular finger noting that they are number one. Very seldom, if ever, have we seen someone hold up their hand and say, “I’m number two.”

Yet the moment we figuratively hold up that single finger and turn our attention away from Him and on to ourselves, we end up the loser. Placing our confidence in our own fallen nature will always fail us. Boasting in our perceived strength does not make us

strong. Self can never satisfy self. The Scripture speaks of three areas that are reasons to boast – Christ and the cross, grace, and His strength. Let us begin by noting the glory of His cross.



**To glory in His cross (1 Cor. 1:27-2:2; Gal. 6:13, 14).**

<sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, <sup>28</sup> and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that **no man may boast before God.** <sup>30</sup> But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, <sup>31</sup> so that, just as it is written, "**LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.**" <sup>1</sup> And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup> **For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.** (1 Cor. 1:27-2:2)

<sup>13</sup> For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. <sup>14</sup> **But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,** through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6:13, 14)

What is boasting? What does it mean “to glory in?” To boast and glory is to place one’s confidence in something or someone. It also has the idea of highlighting, of making much of something. “Paul

## *Does It Work?*

uses the words to clarify and strongly emphasize an idea which is central to his doctrine of justification. This is the teaching that man's original sin consists in glorifying himself and not giving God his due."<sup>1</sup>

The context of 1 Corinthians 1 is interesting. The Corinthians were placing too much significance on people. They were placing too much confidence in worldly wisdom, strength, position, and possessions. Thus, Paul reminds his audience that God's evaluation of an individual is far different from anything we could possibly imagine.

When God chose us, His selection was not based on

- Our wisdom
- Our might or
- Our nobility

But in stark contrast to our opinion of self and others, God has chosen

- the foolish things
- the weak things
- the base things
- the despised and
- the things that are not

Paul seeks to establish the nothingness of man and the sufficiency of God. By the accumulative language, Paul demonstrates how man, in and of himself, is loathsome.<sup>2</sup>

*Christ, Our Glory*

## *Does It Work?*

Verse 29 tells us why God chooses on this basis. He provides for us a purpose statement, **“So that no man may boast before God.”** “This glorying has as its object something before which all self-praise disappears.”<sup>3</sup>

This same principle is stated in Ephesians 2:7-9.

<sup>7</sup> So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> **not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.** (Eph. 2:7-9)

Notice also the emphasis of 1 Corinthians 1:30, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus.” Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. God is the one who caused Christ to be our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. It is all about God. He is the one who saves us, and it is not of ourselves. Therefore, we are left with nothing to boast in, save Jesus Christ.

What, then, is the apostle’s bottom line? Verse 31 of 1 Corinthians 1, “So that, just as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the LORD.’” We keep coming back to this singular truth because it is all about God.

Notice how Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 2:1, “And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you

the testimony of God.” He did not come with “flash” because he “determined to know nothing among [them] except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” New Testament scholar A.T. Robertson notes the following:

Paul means that he did not think it fit or his business to know anything for his message beyond this “mystery of God.” Save Jesus Christ. I had no intent to go beyond him and in particular, and him crucified. This phase in particular (1Co 1:18) was selected by Paul from the start as the centre of his gospel message. He decided to stick to it even after Athens where he was practically laughed out of court. The Cross added to the **scandalon** of the Incarnation, but Paul kept to the main track on coming to Corinth.<sup>4</sup>

It is our passion to “make much of Jesus Christ,” to put the spotlight on Him and say, “Look who He is! Look what He is doing! Look what He has done!” This is our pursuit because this is what heaven will be like.

“Jesus Christ and Him crucified” is our only boast. If we ever say it is “Jesus Christ plus something,” or “the cross of Jesus Christ minus something,” we are saying He is not enough. May it never be! “May God protect us from such a fearful calamity!”<sup>5</sup> “May it never be” translates a strong negative that carries the idea of virtual impossibility. He uses it [in Galatians 6:14] to tell the Galatians that it was inconceivable for him even

*Does It Work?*

to think of boasting in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

Think of Ephesians 2:6-10 (v.7). We, the Church of Jesus Christ, will be placed on display as trophies of His grace. This same principle is seen in Revelation when, as recipients of crowns, we throw them back to Him who alone is worthy (Rev. 4:9). “Paul gloried in the cross because it was the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross that was the source of his and every believer’s righteousness and acceptance before God and brought the end of his hopeless frustration in pursuing God through works.”<sup>7</sup>

If heaven is all about Him, why would we think this moment is all about us? If Jesus is the centerpiece of time and eternity, why would we boast in anything other than Him?

IF HEAVEN IS ALL ABOUT HIM, WHY WOULD WE THINK THIS MOMENT IS ALL ABOUT US?

IF JESUS IS THE CENTERPIECE OF TIME AND ETERNITY, WHY WOULD WE BOAST IN ANYTHING OTHER THAN HIM?

Our second area of boasting is in His grace.



**To glory in His Grace (1 Cor. 15:10).**

**But by the grace of God I am what I am**, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Cor. 15:10).

*Christ, Our Glory*

## *Does It Work?*

Paul assures his audience that from justification to glorification and everything in between, all is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

There continues to be a misunderstanding about grace and obedience. Notice Paul's language, "I labored more abundantly than they all." Paul's language says that he worked harder than everyone else did. Now, we do not know if this was an idle boast, but Paul's record is impressive and we do not think he was too far off the mark. Paul obeyed God. Yet, notice Paul's language (For whatever reason, we are constantly tripping over this). He said, "I outperformed everyone," yet what we fail to see is his qualifier, "Yet not I, but the grace of God with me." Paul adds this qualifier because of our propensity toward arrogant self-autonomy and devilish pride. We are always saying, "Look at us, look what we have done." In this one statement Paul says,

Even my intense labors in the gospel are ultimately not the result of a personal need to compensate God for his grace, but are themselves the reflection of that very grace at work in my life. Thus, in Pauline theology, even though his labor is a response to grace, **it is more properly seen as the effect of grace. All is of grace; nothing is deserved.**<sup>8</sup>

Paul uses the strongest contrasting conjunction available to him ("but the grace of God which was with

*Christ, Our Glory*

*Does It Work?*

me"). It is the same language of Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 2:12, 13.

**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal. 2:20)

<sup>12</sup>So then, my beloved, just as **you have always obeyed**, not as in my presence only, **but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;** <sup>13</sup>for it is God who is at work in you, **both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** (Phil. 2:12, 13)

Unfortunately, seldom do we hear verse 12 quoted with verse 13. Verse 12 cannot be read in isolation without being misunderstood.

**Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.** — two were in co-operation, Paul and God's grace, but Paul **was only the instrument, willing and active indeed, but only the tool;** hence in the "yet not I" **he rules himself out**, an example for all of us. It was grace that produced the efficiency and the effects.<sup>9</sup>

In attempting to clarify this idea, Jerry Bridges correctly notes the following:

Progressive sanctification very much involves our activity. But it is an activity that must be



*Does It Work?*

carried out in dependence on the Holy Spirit. **It is not a partnership with the Spirit in the sense that we each — the believer and the Holy Spirit — do our respective tasks.** Rather, we work as He enables us to work. His work lies behind all our work and makes our work possible. **The Holy Spirit can and does work within us apart from any conscious response on our part.** We have seen this in the initial act of sanctification when He creates within us a new heart and gives us an entirely new disposition toward God and His will. He is not dependent on us to do His work.<sup>10</sup>

F.J. Huegel continues this train of thought with the following remark:

No, the Christian does not struggle to overcome in his own strength. He does not overcome with the aid of Christ. It is not he plus the aid of his Savior. He does not come first. **It is Christ first and last, with the Christian literally lost in the Savior.** Let us put it this way. We must never forget that it is not the Christian struggling toward a possible but hard won victory. No. It is the Christian standing in a victory already consummated.<sup>11</sup>

Our obedience is nothing more than God's work in us and through us. It is either His fruit or our work. If it

## *Does It Work?*

is His fruit, it is of the Spirit. If it is our work, it is of the flesh. The Scripture tells us that as we obey, we need to keep our minds on Christ.

We take a verse like Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" and we walk away saying, "I can." The point is, "**We can because He does.**" This principle is no different from what is found in John 15:5.

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for **apart from Me you can do nothing.** (John 15:5)

Because of our sin nature, we have a tendency to focus on the fruit or the branch instead of the vine. We have a tendency, while hanging on the vine, to look at other branches, examine their fruit, and compare it to ours. Does that not strike us as odd? Why would we look at another branch? When we do this, we are not looking at the vine.

We cannot separate our obedience from His working. **Our obedience is nothing less than the outworking of Christ in us and through us.** Let us

OUR OBEDIENCE IS  
NOTHING MORE  
THAN GOD'S WORK  
IN US  
AND THROUGH US.

make much of His grace and the outworking of it in us and through us. **Let us choose the good and godly, and then let us thank Him for living His life in us and through us.** Listen carefully to the words of C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*.

*Christ, Our Glory*

I think all Christians would agree with me if I said that though Christianity seems as first to be all about morality, all about duties and rules and guilt and virtue, **yet it leads you on, out of all that, into something beyond.** One has a glimpse of a country where they do not talk of those things, except perhaps as a joke. Everyone there is filled full with what we should call goodness [i.e., fruit] as a mirror is filled with light. But they do not call it goodness [i.e., fruit]. They do not call it anything. **They are not thinking of it. They are too busy looking at the source from which it comes.**<sup>12</sup>

He continues.

The Christian is in a different position from other people who are trying to do good. The Christian thinks any good [i.e., fruit] he does comes from the Christ life inside him. He does not think God will love us because we are good [i.e., bearing fruit], but that God will make us good [i.e., bear fruit] because He loves us . . .<sup>13</sup>

When Christians say the Christ-life is in them, they do not mean simply something mental or moral. When they speak of being “in Christ” or of Christ being “in them,” this is not simply

*Does It Work?*

a way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them . . .<sup>14</sup>

Let us make much of Christ and Grace.

This leads us to the final area of boasting that is to be found in His strength.



**To glory in His strength (2 Cor. 11:23-30; 12:9)**

And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore **most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities**, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Cor. 12:9)

<sup>23</sup> Are they ministers of Christ? — I speak as a fool — I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. <sup>24</sup> From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup> in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; <sup>27</sup> in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— <sup>28</sup> besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? <sup>30</sup> **If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.** (2 Cor. 11:23-30)

*Christ, Our Glory*

*Does It Work?*

The word *infirmity* means “frailty, feebleness, and weakness.” We hesitate to say we are frail, fragile, feeble, and weak, because by doing so, we become transparent and vulnerable. We are, however, weak. This is what He wishes us to be.

Remember 1 Corinthians 1:28?

- God has chosen the foolish things
- God has chosen the weak things
- God has chosen the base things
- God has chosen the despised
- God has chosen the things that are not

Verse 29 tells us why God chooses on this basis: **“So that no man may boast before God.”**

God is magnified against a background of weakness. Jesus Christ is magnified against a background of weakness. Grace is magnified against a background of weakness. To boast in our infirmity reflects the truth that we are boasting in God alone, in Jesus Christ and the cross alone, and in grace alone.

TO BOAST IN OUR  
INFIRMITY REFLECTS THE  
TRUTH THAT WE ARE  
BOASTING IN GOD ALONE,  
IN JESUS CHRIST AND THE  
CROSS ALONE,  
AND IN GRACE ALONE.

The closer we move to truth, the more intense the battle. As we learn these truths, our focus will begin to shift from us to Him. As Michael Wells put it, “We

*Christ, Our Glory*

*Does It Work?*

know that we are moving in the right direction if things get worse before they get better."<sup>15</sup>

Friend, today we must see ourselves in Him, claim His victory, and let our boast be in Him.



### **Making the Transfer**

Seeing Christ and His cross as the source of boasting celebrates the believer's judicial co-crucifixion. When His grace becomes a singular boast, then confidence in the flesh ceases to gain a stronghold. When our weakness is celebrated, then His strength is manifested.

What would you rather have? Would you rather be self-deceived through the merriment of empty, finite sufficiency or would you rather boast of Him?

The assessments of life and its various temporal achievements and peer accolades cannot substitute for the satisfying joy of resting and boasting in Him and His work.

May God open our eyes to see Him. He alone is sufficient for all things. He is to be our boast and glory. Nothing else and no one else can be for us what He is. May we never forget this. May we rest in His embrace of us and not in our hold of Him.

MAY WE REST IN HIS  
EMBRACE OF US AND NOT  
IN OUR HOLD OF HIM.

*Christ, Our Glory*

# Epilogue

Today, you have a choice to make. You make this choice every moment of every day. Either you will choose yourself, or you will choose Christ, but you will choose. You can argue as to the theological complexity of the issue or the diversity of choices contained in every day, but when you scrape away all of the verbiage and activity, it is really a choice between you and God.

- You will choose to be satisfied with either the giver (the substance) or His gifts (the shadow).
- You will choose to see yourself as being either alive to God or alive to self.
- You will choose either to rest in His victory or to seek to achieve your own.
- You will choose either to make much of Him or to make much of self, but you will choose and you will make this choice every moment of every day.

Join me in choosing Him. Let us make Him our boast.

## *Does It Work?*

Let us put off our self-centered focus and once more fix our eyes on Him. Today, I choose Him. Who will you choose? Let us rest confidently in Him to work His perfect will in us and through us to those around us. Let us choose Him.

It is our desire as a community of faith to assist those who seek Him. If there is anything we can do to help you in your journey, please do not hesitate to contact us at [office@waukeshabile.org](mailto:office@waukeshabile.org). We would love to hear from you and to journey with you in your pursuit of Him.

## *Epilogue*



## ENDNOTES

---

### INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> “Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.” Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, by Karl Marx *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, February, 1844. ([http://www3.baylor.edu/~Scott\\_Moore/texts/Marx\\_Opium.html](http://www3.baylor.edu/~Scott_Moore/texts/Marx_Opium.html))

### CHRIST, OUR SUFFICIENCY

<sup>1</sup> *TDNT*, s.v. “Πληρωμα,” by Gerhard Delling, 6:303. Delling’s comments on these passages are rich with meaning. “The [plaroma] statements in Colossians present the full unity of the work of God and Christ in such a way that the distinctness of person is preserved and yet monotheism is not imperiled. God works through Christ in His whole fullness (1:19), in His full deity (2:9).” *Ibid.*, 6:304.

<sup>2</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1982), 53.

<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 252.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>5</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians*, 193.

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, “Christ is All in All,” in *The Saints Treasury*, 1657, 4, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 272, 273.

<sup>8</sup> *TDNT*, s.v. “Τελεω,” by Gerhard Delling, 8:59.

<sup>9</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, The Daily Study Bible Series, 2 vols. Rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1975), 2:258.

<sup>10</sup> Robert G. Gromacki, *Stand Bold in Grace: An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 164. “Attention should also be paid to the contrast between the Old Testament priest who stands while engaging in his ministry, and Jesus Christ who sat

## ENDNOTES

down. To our author it pointed up the fact that the priest's work of offering sacrifices as never really finished. With Christ came radical change. He not only sat as indicating His offering was concluded, but the place of this seating was the position of honor and authority in the very presence of God." Homer A. Kent, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 191, 192.

<sup>11</sup> Barclay, *John*, 258, 259.

<sup>12</sup> Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1962), 80.

<sup>13</sup> Burroughs, "Christ is All in All," 1.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 168, 169.

<sup>15</sup> John Eadie, *Ephesians* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 2:43.

<sup>16</sup> Handley C. G. Moule, *Ephesian Studies: Expository Readings on the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians* (New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.), 115.

<sup>17</sup> Eadie, *Ephesians*, 2:226.

<sup>18</sup> Hodge, *Ephesians*, 42.

<sup>19</sup> "All temporal and eternal blessings of God flow from this same fountain, His grace, His free, unmerited good will and favor, and are imparted to us through Christ." George Stoeckhardt, *Ephesians* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1952), 54.

## CHRIST, OUR IDENTITY

<sup>20</sup> These are the questions asked by both the biblical theologian and the secular philosopher. The questions never change, but the answers to the questions do, based on one's presuppositions.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, one of the fathers of humanistic existentialism, quoted in Norman L. Geisler, *Is Man the Measure? An Evaluation of Contemporary Humanism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 40-41.

<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, "Christ is All in All," Abridged from *The Saints' Treasury*, (1657) by Don Kistler; available from <http://www.puritansermons.com/banner/burrou1.htm>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>23</sup> Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness* (Littleton, CO: Abiding Life Press, 1991), 109.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>25</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 123. “The ‘I’ in Gal 2:20 can be compared with the concept of ‘our old man’ in Rom 6:6, who dies with Christ in baptism.” *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>26</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians*, NIGTC, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 144.

<sup>27</sup> A. B. Simpson, *The Christ Life* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1980), 16.

<sup>28</sup> Henry W. Holloman, “Sanctification: Rediscovering the Transforming Power of Sanctification” in *Understanding Christian Theology*, general editors, Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Nelson, 2003), 971.

<sup>29</sup> L.E. Maxwell, *Born Crucified* (Chicago: Moody, 1945), 17. [emphasis his]

<sup>30</sup> F.J. Huegel, *Forever Triumphant* (Minneapolis: Dimension Books, 1955), 19.

<sup>31</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 147.

<sup>32</sup> Huegel, *Forever Triumphant*, 15, 19.

<sup>33</sup> John F. MacArthur, *Ephesians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 60. [emphasis his]

<sup>34</sup> BAGD, p. 773.

<sup>35</sup> Wells, *Sidetracked*, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Burroughs, “Christ is All in All.”

<sup>37</sup> F.J. Huegel, *Bone of His Bone* (Sargent, GA: The SeedSowers, 1997), 14, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 466.

<sup>39</sup> Major W. Ian Thomas, *The Indwelling Life of Christ: All of Him in All of Me* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Press, 2006), 9, 10.

<sup>40</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, The Epistles of Paul (Nashville: Broadman, 1931), 5:290.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>41</sup> "Romans 6 - The Christian's Identification with Christ," Wil Pounds, 1999; available at <http://www.abideinchrist.com/messages/rom6iden.html>
- <sup>42</sup> H.A. Ironside, *Addresses on the Epistles of John and an Exposition of the Epistle of Jude* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1931), 168.
- <sup>43</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Letters of John*, TNTC (Revised ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 171, 172.
- <sup>44</sup> Burroughs, "Christ is All in All."
- <sup>45</sup> Chuck Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening* (Dallas: Word, 1990), 19. [emphasis his]
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.
- <sup>47</sup> Bob George, *Faith that Pleases God* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001), 131.

## CHRIST, OUR VICTORY

- <sup>1</sup> Henry W. Holloman, "Sanctification: Rediscovering the Transforming Power of Sanctification" in *Understanding Christian Theology*, ed., Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Nelson, 2003), 971.
- <sup>2</sup> Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness* (Littleton, CO: Abiding Life Press, 1991), 66.
- <sup>3</sup> "And in him every disciple shares his victory (a conviction strongly emphasized in 1 John: the believer conquers the evil one, 2:13-14, the Antichrists of this world, 4:4, and the world itself, 5:4-5)." George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco: Word, 1987), 36:288.
- <sup>4</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, ed. Gordon D. Fee (revised ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 633.
- <sup>5</sup> "The verb νικᾶω is used here only in this Gospel. It is found 6 times in 1 John including the expression νικᾶ τον κοσμον (1 John 5:4-5), as here. It is especially frequent in Revelation (17 times), being used there as here of Christ's victory." *Loc. Cit.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Loc. Cit.*
- <sup>7</sup> F.J. Huegel, *Forever Triumphant* (Minneapolis: Dimension Books, 1955), 15, 19.
- <sup>8</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 326.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>9</sup> “The old relationship to sin is broken, - for they **federally** shared Christ’s death to sin.” “The same great **federal** fact is brought out in Colossians 2:20 and Colossians 3:3. It was upon this **federal** fact that Paul’s whole life hung, as he testified to Peter ([emphasis added] Gal. 2:20).” William R. Newell, *Romans: Verse by Verse* (Chicago: Moody, 1938), 200, 203.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 212. [emphasis his]

<sup>11</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 738.

<sup>12</sup> Heugel, *Forever Triumphant*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Newell, *Romans*, 213.

<sup>14</sup> Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 739.

<sup>15</sup> Watchman Nee, *Sit, Walk, Stand* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977), 55.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 56, 57.

<sup>17</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (2 vols., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 1:332.

<sup>18</sup> *TDNT*, s.v. “Νικαω,” by O. Bauernfeind, 4:945.

<sup>19</sup> Murray, *Romans*, 1:331.

<sup>20</sup> Donald W. McCullough, *Waking from the American Dream* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 116.

<sup>21</sup> Bob George, *Faith that Pleases God*, (Eugene: Harvest House, 2001), 194, 196, 197.

<sup>22</sup> Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, 170.

<sup>23</sup> George, *Faith that Pleases God*, 214.

<sup>24</sup> Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, 178.

<sup>25</sup> L.E. Maxwell, *Born Crucified*, (Chicago: Moody, 1945), 19. [emphasis his]

## CHRIST, OUR GLORY

<sup>1</sup> *NIDNTT*, s.v. “Boast,” by H.C. Hahn, 1:228.

<sup>2</sup> “**A more contemptible expression in Greek thinking was not possible. Being was everything** [emphasis added].” Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 349, on 1 Cor. 1:28.

<sup>3</sup> *NIDNTT*, s.v. “Boast,” 1:228.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>4</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, The Epistles of Paul (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 4:82.

<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, Trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 21:184.

<sup>6</sup> John F. MacArthur, *Galatians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1987), 204.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 736.

<sup>9</sup> W.E. Vine, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1951), 207.

<sup>10</sup> Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 115.

<sup>11</sup> F.J. Huegel, *Forever Triumphant* (Minneapolis: Dimension Books, 1955), 37.

<sup>12</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Col, Inc., 1943), 130, 131.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 64

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 64, 65.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness* (Littleton: Abiding Life Press, 1991), 173.





Christianity works because Christ worked. He is not only necessary, but He is enough! It is the intent of this short book to help the Christian learn about and rest in the penetrating goodness of God for His people, to discover personally and intimately that Jesus is the radiant, visible glory of the triune God. He is the substance of every shadow, the revealed picture of every puzzle. He is the keeper, fulfiller, and guardian of every promise and testament. He is the King who sits on an immutable throne. He is the Savior of sinners, the subject of every legend, and the Shepherd of all sheep. He is the foundation on which every building is constructed, the mortar that binds entire buildings together, and the sinew and ligament of every joint. He is the end of all satisfaction, the hero of every story, and the champion of every conflict. God has written a *Story* that overflows the literary boundaries of the Bible and engulfs all of life. This includes you and me. May you find Him to be all you need and one day all you want.

Patrick J. Griffiths is a pastor at Waukesha Bible Church in Waukesha, WI. Please visit [www.waukeshabible.org](http://www.waukeshabible.org) for more resources, including audio and printed materials.



Tom Veil Publications

ISBN: 978-0-9847195-1-0



0 780864 218510