

The Only Test God Gives

God's goal for every believer is oneness with Him. To reach it, we must take on the character of Christ.

All the dealings God has with the soul of the believer are to bring it into oneness with Himself, that the final prayer Jesus prayed before He died may be fulfilled: "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:21-23, NKJV).

This divine union was the glorious purpose in the heart of God for His people before the foundation of the world. It was accomplished in the death of Christ. It has been made known by the Scriptures. It is realized as an actual experience by many of God's dear children.

However, it is not experienced by all. God has not hidden this union or made it hard, but the eyes of many are too dim and their hearts too unbelieving for them to grasp it. It is for the purpose of bringing His people into the personal and actual realization of this that the Lord calls upon them so earnestly and so repeatedly to abandon themselves to Him. Thus He may work in them all the good pleasure of His will.

All the previous steps in the Christian life lead up to this. The Lord has made us for it, and until we have understood it and voluntarily consented to embrace it, the "travail of His soul" (Is. 53:11, KJV) for us is not satisfied, nor have our hearts found their destined and real rest.

The Reality of the Christ Life The usual course of Christian experience is pictured in the history of the disciples. First, they were awakened to see their condition and their need and came to Christ and gave their allegiance to Him. Then they

followed Him, worked for Him and believed in Him.

Yet how unlike Him they were, seeking to be set up one above the other! They ran away from the cross, misunderstanding His mission and His words. They forsook their Lord in time of danger. But still they were sent out to preach, recognized by Him as His disciples, possessing power to work for Him. They knew Christ as their Lord and Master but did not yet know Him as their life.

Then came Pentecost, and these same disciples came to know Him as one with them in actual union, their very indwelling life. From then on they knew what He was within them, working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure, delivering them by the law of the Spirit of His life, from the bondage to the law of sin and death under which they had been held.

No longer did their wills and interests war with His. His will alone motivated them. His interest alone was dear to them. They were made one with Him.

Surely all can recognize this picture, though perhaps the final stage of it has not yet been fully reached. You may have given up much to follow Christ. You may have believed on Him and worked for Him and loved Him—and yet may not be like Him.

Allegiance you know, and confidence you know, but you do not yet know union. There are two wills, two interests, two lives. You have not yet lost your own life that you may live only in His.

Once it was “I and not Christ.” Next it was “I and Christ.” Perhaps now it is even “Christ and I.” But has it yet come to be Christ only, and not I at all?

If you have followed me to this point, you will surely now be ready to take the definite step of faith which will lead your soul out of self and into Christ. You will then be prepared to abide in Him forever and to know no life but His. You need

only to understand what the Scriptures teach about this marvelous union and see that it is intended for you.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16: "Do you not know you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (NKJV), and then look at the opening of the chapter to see whom Paul was addressing—"babes in Christ" who were "yet carnal" and walked according to men (1 Cor. 3:1). You will then see that this soul-union of which I speak, this unspeakably glorious mystery of an indwelling God, is the possession of even the weakest and most failing believer in Christ. It is true that every believer's "body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God" (1 Cor. 6:19).

But although this is true, it is also equally true that the believer has to know it and live in the power of it. Like the treasures under a man's field which existed there before they were known or used by him, so does the life of Christ dwell in each believer before he knows it and lives in it. Its power is not manifested until, intelligently and voluntarily, the believer ceases from his own life and accepts Christ's life in its place.

But it is very important not to make any mistakes here. This union with Christ is not a matter of emotions but of character. It is not something we are to feel but something we are to be. The vital thing is not the feeling, but the reality.

Living in Our Emotions No one can be one with Christ who is not truly Christlike. Yet often strong emotions of love and joy are taken as an indication of divine union in cases where essential proofs of a Christlike life and character are lacking. This is completely contrary to the Scripture declaration that "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6). Oneness with Christ means being made "partakers of [His] nature" (2 Pet.

1:4).

If we are really one with Christ, it will not be contrary to our nature to be Christlike and to walk as He walked; it will be in accordance with our nature. Sweetness, gentleness, meekness, patience, long-suffering, charity, and kindness will all be natural to the Christian who is a partaker of the nature of Christ. It could not be otherwise.

But people who live in their emotions do not always see this. They feel so at one with Christ that they look no further than this feeling. They often delude themselves by thinking they have come into divine union, when all the while their nature and dispositions are still under the sway of self-love.

Our emotions are most untrustworthy and are largely the result of our physical conditions or our natural temperaments. It is a fatal mistake, therefore, to make them the test of our oneness with Christ.

This mistake works both ways. If I have very joyous emotions, I may be deluded into thinking I have entered into the divine union when I have not. If I have no emotions, I may grieve over my failure to enter into the divine union when I really have entered.

Character is the only real test. God is holy, and those who are one with Him will be holy also.

Our Lord Himself expressed His oneness with the Father in these words: "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19). The test Christ gave by which the reality of His oneness with the Father was to be known was the fact that He did the works of the Father. I know of no other test for us now.

Awareness of Christ's Presence Having guarded against the danger of an emotional experience of divine union, let us

consider how the reality is to be reached. First I would say that it is not a new attitude to be taken by God but only a new attitude to be taken by us.

If we are really children of God, then our hearts are already the temple of God and Christ is already within us. What is needed, therefore, is only that we recognize His presence and yield fully to His control.

Since the day of your conversion the Lord has been dwelling in your heart, but you have lived in ignorance of it. During all that time, every moment might have been passed in the sunshine of His sweet presence and every step taken under His advice. But because you did not know it and did not look for Him there, your life has been lonely and full of failure.

But now that I make you aware of this, how are you going to receive it? Are you glad to have Him? Will you throw every door wide open to welcome Him in? Will you joyfully and thankfully give up your life to Him?

Will you consult Him about everything and let Him decide each step and mark out every path? Will you invite Him into your innermost chambers and share your most hidden life with Him?

Will you say "Yes" to His longing for union with you? Will you, with a glad and eager surrender, hand yourself and all that concerns you over into His hands? If you will do this your soul will begin to know something of the joy of union with Christ.

It seems too wonderful to be true that such poor, weak, foolish beings as we are were created for such an end as this. Yet it is a blessed reality. We are even commanded to enter into it.

We are exhorted to lay down our lives so that His life may be lived in us. We are asked to have no interests but His interests, to share His riches, to enter into His joys, to

partake of His sorrows, to have the same mind He had, and to think and feel and act and walk as He did.

Will we agree to all this? The Lord will not force it on us because He wants us as His companions and His friends, and a forced union would be incompatible with this. It must be voluntary on our part. The bride must say a willing "yes" to the bridegroom, or the joy of their union is in question.

Can we say a willing "yes" to our Lord?

It is a very simple yet real transaction. There are three steps. First, we must be convinced that the Scriptures teach this glorious indwelling of God. Then we must surrender our whole selves to Him to be possessed by Him. And finally, we must believe that He has taken possession and is dwelling in us. We must begin to consider ourselves dead and to consider Christ as our only life.

We must maintain this attitude of soul unwaveringly. It will help us to say, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20) over and over, day and night, until it becomes the habitual breathing of our souls. We must continually deny self and put on the life of Christ.

We must do this not only by faith but also in practice. We must continually put self to death in all the details of daily life and let Christ live and work in us instead. We must never do the selfish thing but always the Christlike thing. We must let this become, by its constant repetition, the attitude of our whole being.

As we do this we will understand at least something of what it means to be made one with Christ as He and the Father are one. Christ left all to be joined to us. We must also leave everything to be joined to Him in this divine union that words cannot express, but for which our Lord prayed when He said, "I

do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:20-21).

Read a companion devotional.

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