

The Christian and the Indwelling Christ

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Date: 28 August 2011

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[0 : 00] Our text is found this evening in Colossians chapter 1, and in the second part of verse 27, we may just read the verse talking about those who become by grace the saints of God.

But to them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

And the theme is obviously the Christian and the indwelling Christ, who is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

It is perhaps something we do not think about all that much. But until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Gentile nations were left almost exclusively in spiritual darkness.

While in Israel God had set forth his many promises concerning everlasting salvation, salvation the Savior could say, remember, at the well salvation is of the Jews.

[1 : 33] God had worked among the Israelites, and he revealed his will for salvation to Israel through the prophets.

And it is useful to notice that, and to recognize that, and to appreciate all the more, just how wonderful the purpose of God is in bringing the Gentiles into the faith of Israel afford.

God had worked among the people of Israel through the prophets. And at the coming of Jesus himself, this ministry of Jesus is likened, when he began to minister, it is likened into a piercing of the darkness, of the dark cloud of sin and ignorance, by revealing to the world what Paul calls here the secret which had been kept by God until his set time.

And if you did wonder why we read in the book of Acts, in chapter 14, where Paul was speaking at Lystra to the people, and Acts 17, where he was at the Areopagus in Athens, then this is the whole point of reading these passages.

Because they both refer to God leaving Gentile nations in their ignorance and darkness. But now, that expression, but now, occurred twice, in Acts 14 and in Acts 17 as well.

[3 : 15] The time had come for the Gentile nations to understand, and to believe, and to come in to the body of Messiah as it were.

The time had come to reveal this mystery, this secret. And Paul himself saw his ministry as a stewardship to make known to the Gentiles this secret, this mystery.

You find it there, for example, in verse 25. He talks about himself as, I have become a minister according to the stewardship from God, which was given to me for you.

He is talking to the Gentiles to fulfill the word of God. Verse 26. The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to his saints.

And it is important to bear that in mind when we look at our own situation in Scotland today and across the world.

[4 : 27] This secret, this mystery, has been revealed, but has to be revealed to individuals.

It is not something we can access by ourselves. We depend upon God in his grace to enlighten us. The point here being made is that at a set time, at God's time, the Gentiles began to hear and understand what God had kept until the coming of Christ.

More or less kept exclusively among the people of Israel. And he is talking here, therefore, about God's disclosure to man of his saving purpose in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is talking about what God has done and does in his sin. And the emphasis here is on cutting through all the mystery religions and the special sects and communities.

There is no secret now about what God can do. That was the whole point. The time had come. God willed to make known, verse 27a, God willed to make known to the Gentiles what are the riches of the glory of this mystery.

[5 : 59] The time had come. And we proclaim to people, not something that is mysterious, you need special light from this leader or that leader.

No, but God himself gives us an understanding through the effective ministry of the gospel as the Spirit brings the truth to bear upon us.

And if you ask the question, what is the main burden here of Paul's words about this secret, this mystery? It is Christ in you.

That is what is true of those who believe the gospel. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Now I want to think about two things with you by way of encouragement in this, the Christian and the indwelling Christ.

First of all, the abiding presence. And what Paul says here is Christ in you. And it's not merely about the words, it's about the reality.

[7 : 11] It's not merely about some scheme, but it's something real and true that God effects in the life of believers. Now I don't suppose sitting here tonight you think about yourself as much as you should as a believer.

Christ in me. Am I right? Yes, I'm right. You're nodding. We don't think enough about it. We don't think about the reality. This is the reality of those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ in me. And this is what he's talking about. The abiding presence of Christ. He's showing us what a wonderful privilege belongs to the Lord's people.

This is about the Christ and the indwelling Christ. You see, and perhaps it's made a little unclear by the way it is put, which is Christ in you?

Some translations, and I think rightly, have there, who is Christ? Who is Christ? The host in the original is who.

[8 : 26] Who is Christ in you? This is the wonderful mystery revealed, that for the believer he can say, Christ is in me.

And that takes us back to the nitty-gritty, that God has made known that the problem man has in knowing God himself is resolved in his sin.

The wrath is removed by the death of Christ. The sinner is brought near. His hostility towards God, and his departures from God, are dealt with in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the person.

And the secret that was locked up, back then, when Jesus began to minister the word, and so on, that secret was suddenly brought out into the light.

It's no longer a secret. It has been disclosed. And you see, it's disclosed to our hearts, when the Spirit, as it were, gives us an understanding.

[9 : 39] This is all about the person. The presence of Christ. What happened when the word became flesh, and dwelt among us, is that they beheld his glory.

The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But it wasn't just a beholding. You're beholding me tonight, and I'm beholding you.

But it's not that kind of beholding. It's beholding in their soul, an understanding of the reality, of who Jesus is, and what he's done for us.

We behold his glory in this way. We behold more and more what he is like, what he is about, and what he means to us.

What is revealed through the Spirit and the Word and the Bible. And we are brought to appreciate this unique relationship to God, through his own Son, Jesus Christ.

[10 : 47] He is at the center of our life. We are united to him. If by faith we trust him. He is in us in that sense, by his Holy Spirit.

We touched on this earlier today. We are brought into a spiritual union with him. And as we were saying earlier today, just because it's an invisible union, it's no less real.

It's as real as can be. I was thinking about this, just in ordinary things. There are many unions within our bodies we can't see.

Okay, they can be seen by a CT scan, or an ultrasound or something. But we are going around, and we don't see the unions that exist within our bodies, yet they are there. And that can be multiplied in all sorts of ways.

Those who work on atoms, and the structure of them, and so on, they see things we don't see. But because we don't see them, it doesn't make them less real.

[11 : 56] They're real. And just because we cannot see the spiritual union, it doesn't make it less real. It's as real as the word of God tells us it is.

We are brought into this position by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are united to him, and he to us, Christ in you.

By his own spirit, he brings us into a real relationship, a real union, a spiritual union, an irreversible union, with himself.

And we are to appreciate these things, so that we can talk to others about them. We see him in this way.

Christ in you. We have his presence, his abiding presence. And whilst it's true that our awareness of that ebbs and flows, doesn't alter the reality.

[13:06] Sometimes we're not very spiritually awake, are we, or sensitive. And we're not aware of his presence as we are at other times.

But you see, the reality is there. It can't change. Just for a moment, to sort of digress, and then come back to Christ in you.

There are many expressions for the Lord Jesus Christ, spiritually united to his people, and they to him.

For example, we're told that we have a nearness to him. He is near to us. He tells us himself, he is with us always.

These two passages, he's near, he's with us, he stands with us. Paul said, he stood with me and strengthened me.

[14:06] These are all expressions of how that union is experienced by us. We talk about the Lord's Supper when we remember the Savior's death.

We meet with him in the Supper faith apprehends in a spiritual way. What the bread and wine are about to us.

There helps to realizing afresh the living link between Christ and his people. And it's not dependent upon how we feel.

It's dependent upon the truth that is revealed that it is Christ in us. To move on for a moment on this whole business of the links and how they're described, we've said, near to us, with us, standing with us, and so on.

And one day we will be with him. He promised that when we depart this life we will be with him where he is, that we may behold his glory.

[15:23] And of course that's a temporary stay. It is the intermediate state. And we wait for the resurrection of our body.

And we're told that when that occurs we shall forever be with the Lord. These are some of the emphases that remind us of this living link between Christ and his people.

And yet wonderful though all these expressions are, they fall short of what Paul is saying here.

They don't convey the riches of the thought in his words Christ in you.

You see, this is a reference to a deep and personal indwelling of Christ by his spirit in the heart of each believer.

Where the spirit of the Lord is, the Lord is. 2 Corinthians 3.17 following tells us about that.

[16:36] Where the spirit of the Lord is, that is where he is in residence. Christ is in residence. And that's what Paul is talking about. The abiding presence is nothing less than Christ in you.

Yes, he's with us, near to us, and so on. But he is more, he is in the believer. And this is something that is not reserved for the select few, for the illuminati, for those who claim to know more, and see more, and understand more.

It's for every believer. Each believer is a saint, set apart through the work of Christ for the service of God.

as what Paul is talking about here. He's talking about what has been given to the saints, to those who believe Christ in you.

And you see, each person who has faith in the work of Christ, in his blood and righteousness, as the ground of their acceptance with God the Father, each of them can say, however haltingly, or hesitatingly, Christ in me.

[18:01] And I say again, we are to make much of that more, perhaps, than we have done before. It is something that is normal to the believer, and necessary for us to appreciate, so that we know what we are saying, when we say, Christ lives in me.

I live in him, and he lives in me. It is not for us to, as it were, to try to answer all the questions that arise from that, because we can get bogged down, and miss the reality of it.

It is enough to accept the word of the Lord on this. That weak and faltering through my faith may be, Christ has said he lives in me.

This is our encouragement. He abides with those who by his grace abide in him. And it is true, of course, that at times we slip and slither away from him.

And he calls us back to restore us. He calls us to repentance. You remember Revelation chapter 3 verse 20 where the church of the Laodiceans had become lukewarm.

[19 : 29] Behold, he says, I stand at the door and knock. You are paying far too much attention to this world and the things, the stuff of this world.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone will open, I will come in and sit with him and he with me. He calls us back to that experience of the fellowship that Paul sends up Christ in you. The last thing we want to consider then, having thought about the abiding presence, is the hope of glory. The apostle, notice the words, does not say, Christ in you gives you a reason to hope for glory.

He doesn't say that. That's true, of course. Christ in you does give you a reason to say, I hope for glory. But Paul doesn't say that. He doesn't say, Christ in you allows you to think I'm going on to everlasting life hereafter.

These things are true. The hope of a Christian is that he will enjoy life that shall never end, and that he will enjoy it as an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ in the new world, in the renewed universe.

[21 : 03] And in that sense, Christ in me gives me that hope. We are saved in this hope. Romans 8, 24 tells us that.

Now, these things are true. But that's not what Paul is saying here. He's saying something more. He's saying, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We hope in Christ. We have a living hope in Christ, and so on. But you see, Paul is saying more here.

He's talking to us about the indwelling Christ as our very hope of glory.

In other words, he is the hope of glory. The very fact that he indwells equals the hope of glory. if you like, it's a name for him.

[22 : 04] He is your hope of glory. After an all, if you think about it, the reason for the hope the Christian has is Christ.

And he has him indwelling. He dwells in his heart by faith as the very hope of glory. it's true that Paul is emphasizing this very precisely.

The Christ that is in us is the hope of glory. I think Hanley Mool said that. The Christ that is in us is the hope of glory.

glory. We do, of course, have the Spirit of God in us, if we are believers in Jesus, as the guarantee. He's the pledge, the first installment of all that God has prepared for those who love. But let us not be mistaken on this.

[23 : 20] The indwelling Christ himself is the hope of glory in us. You see, that's what Paul is saying, who is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

And that presents us with looking at life here in this world, and the life to come in the context of having the very hope of glory dwelling in our hearts, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're going on to an amazing future. We're going on to perfection. We're going on to be able to worship and serve the Lord perfectly.

To enjoy all that he has prepared for us. To enjoy a renewed earth and the heavenly realms. In this hope of glory who dwells in our hearts by faith.

That is Christ. He is the hope of glory, says the apostle. And therefore we are to recognize what we have.

[24 : 37] We have far more in a sense than the saints in the Old Testament. They were looking forward and so much of it was unclear. They saw it afar off.

They weren't able to embrace the substance like us. But the Christian, you see, has in the Lord Jesus Christ, the beginnings of the new creation.

The rising sun, the day spring from on high has visited us. He has risen in our heart. He is the hope of glory in us.

That's something that's altogether wonderful and we are to embrace and to get down on our knees and thank the Lord for. That we have, with Christ in us, we have a living contact with the future in all

its glory that shall never end.

And simply because the hope of it is Christ himself. The hope of glory is he, to borrow from Handley Mool again, the hope of glory is he who is the Lord of it.

[25 : 58] I like that. The hope of glory is he who is the Lord of glory. And for the Christian believer, he dwells in your heart by faith.

We have his abiding presence. Wonderful it is, made to be thought upon, and let us make sure that we do think more about this than we do.

It puts reality, you see, into living in Christ in this world, and him living in us. You meet people, intelligent people, good people, good in a relative sense, they contribute well to society, and they have no hope.

They are without God, without hope in this world. they are agnostic, or atheist, or secular, totally switched off to spiritual and eternal things.

And we have something to tell them about the reality of what it is to be a Christian, Christ in me. He is the hope of glory.

[27 : 20] glory. And how else can they come to understand the real significance of what Christ has done and is doing and will do for his people, unless we tell them.

Tell them about Christ who is the Lord of glory, and who is the very hope of glory in us by faith. So often we let the words and belief and indifference and sometimes antagonism switch us off and make us, it makes us back off.

That's wrong. Sometimes we just resolve we'll just slide along and get through and that will do.

That's wrong. We are to help them towards understanding the good news, understanding that the mystery is mystery no more.

God has brought to pass his promises. The light has come, the light shines, it shines in Christ, and Christ is, and in him alone is the hope of glory.

Let us be stirred up then to look at ourselves in a new light by his own grace and to glory in what he has done in Christ for us.

[28 : 56] The abiding presence, Christ in you. glory and the glorious hope who is Christ.

To them God will, that's to his people, to the saints, not super saints, but to all who are set apart and to God through faith in Christ.

To them God will to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery. Tis mystery no more to them.

It is a mystery that has come to the Gentiles too, who is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

May he bless his word to us.