

HIS . . . IN JOYOUS EXPERIENCE

The Christian's Joy Book
Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE APPEAL – Christ—The Four-Fold Blessing of Life

It remains for us to summarize, in the briefest possible way, the message of the Spirit in the Epistle to the Philippians, thus to gather to ourselves its salient, spiritual truths, permitting Him to focus them more searchingly upon our heart-life, thus to accomplish their designed purpose of effecting in us a truer, richer, fuller Christian Experience.

The Spirit of Christ has given us a four-fold portrayal of those who are “His in Joyous Experience.” As we vitalize each aspect of our relationship to Him and His to us; a full-rounded Christian character, joyous, victorious, will result.

The Complete Chart pictures the “Appeal” of the Epistle, chapter by chapter. The reader is referred to it in Chapter Four.

Chapter I

THE FACT here set forth is our inner, vital union with Christ. We are “**in Christ Jesus**” and He is in us. The INDWELLING CHRIST gives to the Christian life a new center: “**To me to live is Christ.**”

THE FAILURE that threatens is that we do not realize or recognize His presence in us, and continue living our own lives. Thus, for us to live is “ourselves,” not “Christ.”

THE ATTITUDE enjoined upon us, since He is within us, the fundamental fact of Christian Experience, is:

1—SURRENDER TO HIM. Until we do, He is within much as a prisoner, no freedom of action or expression. When He suggests or seeks to prompt the pursuing of a course, our minds are indifferent to His or our wills rise in opposition. When we surrender to Him, a union of spirit, His and ours, is immediately set up.

Our intellectual life is of His prompting. Our affectional life flows in the channels of His choosing. Our practical life expresses more and more His Self rather than ourself. The union strengthens and expands into every department of living as the surrender becomes the permanent, fixedly adhered to attitude of life.

2—SUFFER FOR HIM. Our attitude toward our circumstances is likewise altered. We do not chafe under the injustice of a Roman prison, its confinement and discomfort, nor smart under the strife, the jealousies and even ill-will of those who should honor and revere us. Having surrendered to Him who once suffered for us, it is now our privilege to suffer in small measure for Him. Being for HIM, a divine alchemy turns its gall to joy (1:18, 29). The experience of true Christians in all ages has been one of **“rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name”** (Acts 5:41).

ILLUSTRATION. A cross is formed by two lines, running in opposite directions, crossing each other. The angle of divergence makes the cross. Let that angle be removed and the two become parallel or merge into one; immediately the cross ceases.

Who has not seen this illustrated in child-life? The child is sobbing its very life out because refused something by the parent. The reason is not the thing in question but the attitude of mind and heart toward it—they are set upon having it.

Tactfully the parent turns the child’s attention to something it can have. Delighted, the sobbing ceases. The child is satisfied. Parent and child are at one. The cross has disappeared, through a simple change of attitude, conforming the mind and heart to one who loves and cares.

For joyous, victorious Christian living no word is so all-important as “Surrender.” Change the attitude toward “Him.” He takes the central place of control, and “things” slip into a subordinate place where they cease to vex, nay they serve to glorify our union with Him. With Paul we **“therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”**

“I’ve found a Friend, oh, such a Friend I
He bled, He died to save me;
And not alone the gift of life,
But His own self He gave me.
Naught that I have mine own I call,
I hold it for the Giver:
My heart, my strength, my life, my all,
Are His, and His forever.”

Chapter II

THE FACT now before us is the historic Christ of God, He who came to be our Saviour by a wondrous, gracious humbling of Himself, thereby not alone redeeming us but leaving us an Example, a PATTERN LIFE that for all ages sets forth the ideal, yes, and more, the standard of the Christian life.

THE FAILURE that threatens is that we accept Him as Saviour but not as Pattern; that we refuse to STANDARDIZE our living by His, yes, our state of mind (from which life emanates) by His mind; that we bring Old Nature traits over into our New Life in Christ and label them “Christian” when there is nothing Christian about them, measured by the Standard. What failure this is!

THE ATTITUDE enjoined upon us is that we

1— WORK OUT THE PATTERN in our lives, earnestly contemplating the humility of mind and of resultant life that were in Him, eagerly desiring the same for ourselves, only to realize that God has made provision for the reproducing of the Pattern life in us, since He is “**working in us** (as He did in Him) **to will and to do [work] of His good pleasure.**” The Pattern that would have been our despair, left to objective imitation, is incorporated into our lives, for inward realization.

2— WITHOUT MURMURING. The same God who is working in us the Pattern is selecting and controlling the outer circumstances of life to the same high end. If through pride we murmur, we grieve Him and hinder His purpose. If humbly we yield our lives into the Potter’s hand, what beauty and glory of design He delights to bring out in these “**earthen vessels.**”

To change the figure: “**He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver,**” continuing the refining process till He sees His own face reflected, the likeness of His Pattern Life in us.

ILLUSTRATION. A story comes to mind of our Lord while still here upon earth. It may be but a legend, yet it is so true to what should be our experience of Him that we delight to think of it as actual.

It seems that one evening, just at the close of our Lord’s earthly life, having journeyed up to Jerusalem, He was seated with His disciples, out by the city wall. To dispel the chill of the night air they had built a fire and gathered around it. The Master was talking to them.

One of the company, noting the Lord’s features and form silhouetted by the glare of the fire upon the wall, reached for an ember and traced His reflected image there upon the masonry. In due time the evening was spent, the fire died out and they retired to rest.

The next morning, as people began to pass into the city, the mysterious silhouetted portrait attracted wondering attention. Various conjectures were offered by the crowd that congregated. A fish vender ventured the suggestion: “By his opened mouth, I can see that he is a man like myself, hawking his wares.”

A shoe cobbler replied: “You are mistaken. Don’t you see his stooped-over shoulders. He’s a man like myself, working at his cobbler’s bench.”

But a proud Pharisee in the crowd scorned their suggestions. “Why,” said he, “do you not note that high, noble brow. He belongs, like myself, to the cultured, educated class. Why—I could almost think it a portrait of myself.” (Think of it, the pride of the human heart!)

But one, standing, as he gazed felt a great longing come into his heart, a longing for something he saw there in the likeness on the wall. "Oh," said he, "oh that one might be like that."

And, the story goes, in response to his humble heart-hunger the likeness of Christ leaped from the inanimate portrait on the wall into the very features of this man, till the people turned instinctively to behold the living Christ in the face of one whose heart had opened in humble longing to be like Him.

"With longing all my heart is filled,
That like Him I may be,
As on the wondrous thought I dwell
That Christ liveth in me."

Chapter III

THE FACT to the fore in this chapter is the future, coming Christ, held before our eyes as the inspiring Goal of Christian living, the incentive to present attainment of purity and worthiness of life in intimate fellowship with Him.

THE FAILURE that threatens is that we "rejoice" or glory in anything other than Christ Jesus; that we refuse to set down as "loss" what we previously prized as "gain," and slacken our pace to an unseemly and unworthy "walk" when we have been called to an all-consuming "race," commanding every energy of our being.

THE ATTITUDE enjoined upon us is one of eagerly "**pressing on,**" "**reaching forth unto those things which are before,**" in fine disregard of all that would side-track us or slow us up, spurred on by the fact:

1— WE ARE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN. We came to be such by our New Birth. We are heaven-born, and heaven-bound. Our rights are there. Our wealth is there. Our expectation is from there, for:

2— CHRIST IS COMING, and we "**look for**" Him as our release from present trial, disappointment, all that now besets us in our present "body of humbling," that we may share His likeness and fulness in the "body of His glory."

AN EAGERNESS begotten by the prospect prompts us to put a new evaluation upon the things "**in Christ.**" The ledger of life suffers a severe reversal. The things once on the "gain" side we gladly set down as "**loss for Christ.**"

For us the problem of "worldliness" is solved. We feel the pulsating of an "other-worldliness." Life is a Race and our "values" lie at the Goal.

ILLUSTRATION. In the Grecian games, as the story goes, a certain youth, fearing he might be outstripped by his competitor, took in his hand a golden apple. They ran; and he led his rival.

But, as they neared the goal, watching he could see that gradually, but surely, he was being overtaken. Then he let fall the golden apple. The tempting sight lured the youthful runner to halt an instant to possess himself of the apple. A fatal aside! He had lost the race.

Intent and expectant, eye upon the goal, the prize, the high calling, in Christ Jesus—thus eager and forward reaching, no one shall take our crown (Revelation 3:11).

“Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve,
And press with vigor on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal,
And an immortal crown.”

Chapter IV

THE FACT that finally claims us is the present, loving, constant care of the living Christ, victoriously exalted to the place of power at God’s right hand, the pledge of a never-failing provision for His every follower.

THE FAILURE that threatens is that we so far forget His presence there or disregard His present purposes of grace toward us as to fail to lay hold of His ample provisions for our need.

THE ATTITUDE enjoined upon us is one of drawing upon Him, as a Friend indeed, One possessed of infinite resources which He fain would place at our disposal.

1— PRAYER AND PRAISE are the divinely appointed approach for every believer, the key that unlocks His wealth of resource and floods the soul with peace ineffable.

It is said that two angels were sent forth, each with a basket, the one to gather up the prayers of the saints, the other their praises. The first returned with basket full to overflowing. The saints had so much to ask of God. The second came back with an almost empty basket. So few saints remembered to give praise to God for His many benefits.

2— APPROPRIATE HIS PROMISES. They are so rich and full, couched in such superlative terms, encouraging us to make large claims upon His “**riches in glory**,” assuring that He “**shall supply all your need**.”

Not to appropriate such gracious promises is to rob God of His glory, hurt His heart of love, and impoverish ourselves beyond compute.

ILLUSTRATION. Some years ago we read a booklet entitled, “*Expectation Corner*.” In it is the author’s dream of entering the Glory. A guide shows him about the Father’s vast estates. At length they come to long buildings and, upon inquiry, he is informed,

“These are the store-houses where the servants make provision for the needs of the Father’s children on the earth.”

Looking more closely, he noticed packages lying upon the shelves, many of them covered with dust. "And what are these," he asked. "Oh," said the guide, "these were gotten ready for the Father's children, to meet some special need in their lives, and **THEY WERE NEVER CALLED FOR.**"

Thoroughly aroused, the man began to examine some of them. Presently he came upon one with his own name upon it, and the date. Thinking back, he recalled the severe trial through which he was passing at that particular time, a dire emergency, and here was the Lord's provision for it, ample and sufficient to meet it.

"And to think," said he, "I never called for it."

Unclaimed provisions of His bountiful care! How many are up there, dear reader, meant for you, prepared specially to meet your need, labeled with your name, that you have failed to claim?

He has anticipated your every need, for today, for tomorrow, for the week, the month, the year, yes, for a lifetime. "**Ye have not [simply] because ye ask not.**" "**Ask, and ye shall receive.**"

"Since Jesus is my friend,
And I to Him belong,
It matters not what foes intend,
However fierce and strong.
He whispers in my breast
Sweet words of holy cheer,
How they who seek in God their rest
Shall ever find Him near;—
How God hath built above
A city fair and new,
Where eye and heart shall see and prove
What faith has counted true.

My heart for gladness springs;
It cannot more be sad;
For very joy it smiles and sings,—
Sees naught but sunshine glad.
The sun that lights mine eyes
Is Christ, the Lord I love;
I sing for joy of that which lies
Stored up for me above."

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