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The Measure of Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks

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(A Message as Spoken)

Psalm 122-124.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27). Read this verse carefully, fragment by fragment, to get the full import of its wonderful truth: "GOD was pleased to make known - what is the riches of the glory - of this mystery, which is, CHRIST IN YOU." The riches of the glory, *Christ* in you.

"Know ye not as to your own selves, that Christ Jesus is in you?" (2 Cor. 13:5). That interrogation of the Apostle is not without point, "KNOW YE NOT?" as to *your own selves*, know ye not that Christ is in you? Don't you know this wonderful thing?

"My little children of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). "Till Christ be formed in you"; this is a step on, a going on.

"Whom HE foreknew, HE also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Marvellous words, no man would dare to say this, they are here by revelation of the Holy Spirit.

"Unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ... till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:7,13; ARV). "The measure... of the fulness of Christ."

We want immediately to focus everything in and upon the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is HE who is in view. What we have before us these days is not teaching or truth, that is, to be possessed with more knowledge of truth; it is not service; but it is the LORD Himself.

The object of the Father from first to last is that the Son, the Lord Jesus, shall fill all things, and all things shall be filled with Christ. The value of everything in the eyes of GOD is according to the measure of the manifestation of Christ in it. And it is from that standpoint God determines the value of the thing. How much of the Lord Jesus is manifested through that, and that determines the value from God's standpoint.

If we get focussed there, it would make a great difference, much would have to go because [it is] other than manifesting the Lord Jesus. We must understand that the Father has set the Lord Jesus before His eyes, and the Father's eyes are full of only one object, that is the Beloved, His Son; and in the eyes of God the value of everything is determined by the measure in which His Son is manifested and glorified; that is His end and that is His object.

Spiritual service, vision, vocation, glorification, have no existence apart from Christ; they are not things as things, and cannot be had except in the PERSON of the Lord Jesus.

To many salvation is as a thing. It is detached and made something of by itself, to be given by itself, and for the good of those who receive it. Sanctification is wrapped up in another parcel. So often we think of salvation, sanctification in relation to the persons in view, and so *some thing* for them, but it is CHRIST Himself who IS salvation, HE is sanctification, and HE within as this.

It is the same with service and vocation, often seen only in regard to the persons themselves. "Saved to serve" is only part of the truth, and is a dangerous slogan, for the motive is the service itself and not the Lord. You are so driven with the service that HE is left out. We have detached the thing from the Person, and we find we are gripped and wrapped in the claims of "service" and it becomes the drive of service and in the end breaks us. And again, when service becomes hard and difficult, we say we will give it up, we will resign, thus showing we have separated service from the Person, and have been occupied day in and day out with it, the work, and not with the Lord Himself.

And so with Glorification; yes, this stirs us, we love to sing hymns about our glorification, but God means it to begin now and it must begin now. What is glorification? It is the full manifestation of Jesus Christ in us. God regards salvation, sanctification, vocation, service, glorification, as related to His Son, and of no value apart from HIM; HE IS salvation, HE IS sanctification.

Salvation, sanctification are often held up to people as things to be received for their good; the object being for them to benefit from *some thing* received; as salvation for salvation's sake. God has not saved one soul for salvation's sake. God is not after salvation as an end in itself, but for the sake of the SAVIOUR, for the glory of His Son. It is not salvation that is in view, but the Saviour. If people are only rejoicing in salvation as something received for their own benefit, the Saviour will be eclipsed by the thing salvation. Is not this the cause of arrest and hold up?

The worker has to be brought, by seeing no deep fulness of result to his work, to the place where he cries out, "I can do nothing." So he comes to see salvation, and that to save another soul is utterly beyond him, and is the work of God, and so come to see God's object in salvation, which is the glory of His Son. Salvation is not *some thing*, it is the mighty incoming of a *Person*; "He that hath the SON hath life" (1 John 5:11). "To as many as received HIM" (John 1:12).

This is also true in the matter of sanctification and service. Any service that is not fulfilled on the ground of the indwelling Christ as the Worker cannot effect the purpose of God, for only the Lord Jesus by His Spirit can do the work of God. Yes, called to be a servant in a service you can never fulfil. Service is to call the Lord Jesus into view, and any service that does not do that is not the service of the Holy Spirit but man's service, which does not fulfil God's ends, and it will be tested by the fire and proved valueless.

Christianity is not a doctrine, not truth as truth, but the knowledge of a PERSON; it is knowing the LORD JESUS. You cannot be educated into a Christian. Christianity is the knowledge within of a Person, knowing HIM as dwelling within us.

God has singled out a Person and gathered into that Person all the Divine perfections, everything is inseparably bound up with His Son, HE has put all the fulness of Eternity and the Universe into that Person and bound up all the fulness in Him; not a fragment can be had apart from Him; that which is to characterise the New Creation is in Him. The predestined End of God is a full presentation of the fulness of Christ: "The Church His Body, the fulness of HIM that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23).

Every corner of the Universe speaking audibly of Jesus Christ; so that we shall not be able to go into a place or touch a life without finding an expression of the Lord Jesus.

"Christ in you the hope of glory" - this is heaven. You walk in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Think of the whole Universe like that; a universal expression of His Son in fulness. That is the end God has in view, that Christ shall fill all things, that is what God's end is, a looking into everything and finding it full of Christ. All is made for Him, and in the New Creation all will speak of His presence and show forth some characteristic of Him. Oh! the joy even now when you touch a life and find immediately that life is full of the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus is the fulness of that life, what a benediction it is.

God has singled out a Person and set Him forth to be seen of all - the MAN CHRIST JESUS.

You can't go outside of A to Z in the realm of literature, you box the compass of language between A and Z: likewise Christ Jesus is FIRST and LAST of God's New Creation, and all that is in between, you cannot get outside of that. We must never think of anything as outside of Christ, HE is Salvation, HE is Sanctification, HE is Redemption, Justification, Peace, Wisdom, Love, Heaven. "Know ye not as to your own selves that Christ is in you," *this CHRIST* - in you! Do you see the possibilities and the tremendousness of this? The whole potentialities of that Universe in every child of God!

God is going to transform His Universe not from without but from within. How? By putting Jesus Christ within the believer by His Holy Spirit, and thence a two-fold activity - being conformed to Him by His Spirit, and He being formed in the believer; thus He is going to make His New Creation.

"Christ IN YOU the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). "God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son, and he that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:11,12).

"If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9).

"The Lord Jesus who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:21) A.R.V.

"Put on the New Man which is being renewed unto knowledge, after the image of Him that created him, where there cannot be Greek and Jew.... but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:10) A.R.V.

"The church which is His body, the fulness of HIM that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23).

The Christian life is not by effort, and not by struggle; not merely trying to put into practice certain maxims, or trying to attain to a certain measure; but from beginning to end and all together a matter of knowing the Lord Jesus *within*. Of course this implies response to Him, and a continual yieldedness to His working by His Spirit within, and so co-operating with Him in His purpose of conformity to the image of His Son.

We have all grown since we were born. How did we grow? Not by sitting down and considering we ought to increase our stature, not by determining to grow so much today and a bit more tomorrow; not by painful efforts to increase our dimensions and so on; but we "just grew!" - like Topsy. But while we "just grew" we had to respond to the laws of growth. So in the spiritual realm, we have got to recognise the laws of growth, and where those are not responded to, or are violated, there can be no growth, but there is arrest, weakness and loss.

Why is spiritual growth so slow in some and so gloriously quick in others? Because some kick and question, or argue with God, go round and round the point asking, does it mean this? Must I do this? Is it necessary? Can I, may I do this? And so on. Yet these very people are loudest in *saying* they want only the will of God, but their very affirmation often shows a struggle is going on, and their growth is fraught with a good deal of friction.

While others in a beautiful sincerity and purity of spirit are immediately letting go to the Lord, so HE is able to lead them on, without waste of time in controversy with the will of God; and there is no weakness through there not being an utter abandonment and wholehearted obedience and surrender to that will. There is a passion for the Lord HIMSELF, and for Him to have His full way at whatever cost.

It all depends on our appreciation of the Lord Jesus. When we get a true value of Him, and see all that He is for us to the Father, and as by faith we appropriate HIM, we quietly grow - "Beholding HIM are changed (transformed from within) into the same image, from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18).

The difficulty to growth is the regarding things as apart from the PERSON, the Lord Jesus. We would never walk round the Scripture, as we sometimes do, debating whether we would or would not if we had a full appreciation of Him, and our passion was for Him to get the fullest glory possible; we should instantly yield if it meant Christ was going to get more glory.

Is not the difficulty often in regarding aspects of the Christian life as something in themselves?

The Lord Jesus adequately appreciated gets rid of all the strain of spiritual growth. Christ is most glorified where Christ is most in the heart. Growth is bound up with the Beloved One; and growth is by being occupied with HIM; by giving the Lord Jesus His place in everything; HE the first and HE all and in all. It is all a matter of the measure of Christ, we MUST see that *everything* is bound up with the Lord Jesus Himself.

Everything is a matter of knowing the Lord in our hearts, then the Lord has got a clear way in us and through us.

Get focussed on Him and see everything is HIMSELF.

The Gospel of God is that we are saved to be conformed to the image of His Son. "A coming to the fulness of the measure of Christ, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).