

Christ is our life

*'Know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge,
that you may be filled up with all the fullness of God.'*

Ephesians 3:19



Christ is our life

Your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:3

Christ lives in me. Gal 2:20

The Spirit of God dwells in you. Rom 8:9

We have the mind of Christ. 1 Cor 2:16

We often live with a contradiction regarding who we claim to be and how we actually live. Sometimes there is a gulf between our Christian theory and the realistic practice of living the Christ life.

At best, most Christians only see themselves as forgiven sinners who are doing the best they can to be good. What have they understood about being born again in the image of Christ? Do they see being born again as a figure of speech for being forgiven, but still retain the same old self as before?

If it is by faith we are born again to a living hope by being crucified with Christ, then the life we are supposed to claim as our life is the life of Christ. We are not someone who is still alive in the flesh having put on a religious cover.

Would it be reasonable to say it is not possible to sin while walking by the Spirit and living the Christ life? The Bible says it is. Therefore we can also say we can only sin when we function according to life in the flesh. If that is true, and it is, while we mostly think we are not living according to the flesh, it appears that at the same time we are not aware we are making choices not to live the Christ life.

Our awareness of where we are at any time in our thinking has a lot to be desired. How can we be aware of impure thoughts if we sleep in our faith in regards to our life in Christ? How will we know we have thoughts of pride, arrogance, and converting if we are sleeping? How will we be aware we are unteachable and resist good instruction if we have no consciousness of what is going on? How will we know we are alive if we sleep? God may be knocking but we don't hear.

The Christ life needs mind control

If we are to be renewed in our minds as the Bible indicates, (Rom 12:2) we need to know what's going on in our minds. We need to ask

ourselves, is our mind conforming to the mind of Christ?

This requires spiritual knowledge; we cannot live the Christ life if we are not fully informed of His life, and how He has provided for our growth in holiness to be aware of His thoughts. "*But we have the mind of Christ.*" (1 Cor 2:16) by His Spirit and His written word.

The mindset of the Christian needs to be with the Spirit while taking the effort to disregard the mindset of the flesh. (Rom 8:5-6) We are responsible for guarding against the mindset of the flesh, and then taking decisive action. The tongue might be like the rudder of a ship, but the mind is the motor that moves the rudder.

James 3:4-5

Nobody sins without first entertaining thoughts that are inclined to speak or act in this way. Someone may say they have acted without thinking, but the real point is, they have not considered the consequences of their thoughts. If we are to behave in a way that pleases God, we must first guard against thoughts that result in wrong doing.

To keep our behaviour pure, we must understand who we are in Christ and hold fast to what God has done if we are to avoid acting in a way that is not consistent with what God has done by giving us the life of Christ.

'Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.'

Col 3:2-3, 5, 10

Faithfully putting on Christ makes us more spiritual, so we need to live as spiritual beings in the image of Christ, and not just as those saved from the dead.

We have to remember we dwell in the presence of Christ in God, so it is only right that He puts us to the test to see how much we have grown in Christ. He tests us through on the job training to see if we do as we say.

The Christ life is consistently faithful

It's not that we make a jump from the spirit to the flesh without knowing, we are often already aligned with the flesh because we are already thinking as people of the world who are addicted to earthly things. We can be dreadfully unaware we have put on the old way of life which makes us vulnerable to temptation. We cannot live the Christ life by default; it must be a conscious decision.

Walking or living by the Spirit of Christ is a conscious choice that needs to be made continually throughout the day. Coasting along merrily in thinking our Spirit life will take care of itself is to take the easy road that invites compromise of our faith.

Neither can living the Christ life be done with our minds in neutral. Coasting along in neutral is sleeping at the wheel. The danger is it is natural for the sleepy undisciplined mind to want to travel on the broad road of least resistance.

Walking in the spirit must be a conscious decision. We need to be aware we enter the

kingdom of God through the narrow gate of the Cross, and that requires commitment.

Our actions correctly reveal what's on our mind as we walk either ignorantly or wisely. The renewing of our minds has to be a present and continuous process because our minds are always looking for things of interest, they continue without ceasing, so if we don't direct our interest towards the kingdom of God, the world will have our attention as the memories of our old life in the flesh take hold.

Knowing this truth doesn't absolve us of responsibility, because the choices we make are still ours, we are the ones who sin and the consequence must be endured. We are called on to be diligent, to be on guard, to be careful as to what we say and do because the devil prowls around looking for people to devour.

If we are continually struggling with our sinful nature with little result, could this mean we don't really believe God has given us a new life in Christ? Do we believe our old life has been put to death to be given no more air space? Isn't it true that we are now to live the

new life we have received in Christ? How can we live the Christ life if we still see ourselves as alive in the flesh, or that the flesh still has power over us?

Even when we begin to think about doing that which is not suitable for a child of God, we have already begun to think of ourselves as being of the flesh, so the next step to doing is even more likely. When we get angry and behave in a less than loving way, we have rejected God and denied who we are in Christ.

Faith requires the mind to be focused on the truth revealed by the Spirit while actively killing off the sinful thoughts as no longer suitable for the life of a child of God who has been given everything pertaining to life and godliness.

The Christ life is staying in step with God

'If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.'

Gal 5:25

The word 'walk' is not an invitation but a command. Walking by the Spirit is best understood in the sense of keeping pace with the Army drill instructor. Not to mention that

the one who is out of step disturbed the whole formation. When many are out of step you have a rabble, not a regiment. In some churches there are many who call their own timing which results in an unholy rabble.

The command to keep step with the Spirit is of utter importance because our lives and the lives of others depend on us obeying. God's children were never intended to make their own way; they are to follow the way of Christ under the guardianship of the Spirit.

To walk correctly we need the light of the Spirit, the way to the light is obedience, and so we turn on the light and walk as Jesus walked.

Our focus needs to be on the life of the Spirit of Christ, so that we are true to the heavenly life we have received from God. However the opposite truth is the popular trend, we focus on the earthly life, as to what we will eat and drink, where we will go, and what we will do; as a result the kingdom of God is not the first thing in our life.

Matt 6:31-33

In the midst of this confusion the flesh wars against the spirit. To aid in this war we are not to give the flesh any sense of having an influence in our life. We must remember the flesh has no power other than what we give it.

We cannot live as if we have developed a dual identity, we are not to be divided, and we are not to be double minded. If we are not living and walking by the Spirit who lives in us, then we are living in the shadow of the flesh.

Of course there are obviously lingering memories of the past life of the flesh which we need to be put away with discipline and determination, but that is not the real us God has made new.

We are children of God; we are not to be confused about our life. We are to reckon the flesh to be dead to us by faith, as we live in the Spirit by the same faith, while we are being transformed by the renewing of our mind into the image of Christ. Rom 12:1-2

Christian faithfulness means being true to the Christ life by faith, always looking to the enabling of the Spirit. If we are battling with

the flesh as if this is still our life, then we have not understood what God has done in us by giving us a new life in Christ. This is why we *walk by faith and not by sight.* 2 Cor 5:7

'Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete. Col 2:6-7, 9- 10

The Christ life has God's kingdom priority

'But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.' Matt 6:33

Having the Christ life means loving God with all our heart, mind and strength. *'And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.'* Matt 22:37-38

Living the Christ life means loving our neighbour as ourselves. *"And a second is like*

it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” Matt 22:39-40

Having the Christ life means fulfilling the requirements of the Law of God. *'For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'* Rom 8:3-4

Living the Christ life means we can overcome the world and the darkness. *'Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

John 8:12

Having the Christ life means we can endure persecution for His name sake. *"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they*

persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matt 5:11-12

Having the Christ life means making the effort to confirm our calling. *'For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'*

2 Pet 1:5-8, 10-11

Having the Christ life means having the same attitude as Christ. *'Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be*

grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.'

Phil 2:5-8

Having the Christ life means working with God to be blameless and innocent. *'Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.'*

Phil 2:12-16

Having the Christ life means leaving the old nature behind by clinging to God. *'put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,*

and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.' Eph 4:22-24, 32

Having the Christ life means loving others in the most excellent way possible. *'Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.'* 1 Cor 13:4-7

Embrace the Spirit of Christ' life

What is impossible for natural man is a piece of cake and simple to accomplish for the Spirit of God. The demands of Christ Jesus for the lives of those who follow Him are not achievable without abiding in the Spirit.

The major problem we seem to have is forgetting what God has already done in giving us a new life, which is necessarily coupled to the Spirit as a working unit. Forget

the Spirit of Christ, and the unity God has created is disjointed and unable to function as God intends. When we begin to manage our affairs as if we are not coupled to God, we are without power to live the Christ life.

The evidence that we are endeavouring to work alone becomes clear when we speak of ourselves and Christ as if we are not joined inseparably to God. This is seen when we talk of our inability or weaknesses in contrast to the goodness of God which escapes us. Instead we should be seeing evidence of the flesh as inconsistent with the life of a child God has made to be holy. This weak way of thinking is a denial of what God has already done through Christ; it also denies His power is at our disposal to defeat the darkness that clings to us. When we continue to re-run bad habits we are not walking as Jesus walked.

We may be able to quote the Bible about the new life in Christ, but we often live as if it is only a future prospect to happen when Christ comes again. But just as eternal life has already started now, to be fully realised later, the joining with the Spirit of God for our

holiness has already happened with the complete fullness to come. The clearer we see ourselves in Christ, the greater the motivation we have to draw even closer to Him by denying what is foreign to His life.

At the present time we have to live as if our future hope is already working, not to claim what hasn't been achieved, but to crystallise our efforts to be true to the union with the Spirit of Christ that God has already set in place.

It is painfully clear we often have a problem with our insight into God's word. We may know the details of the working of God but miss the reality because we are still too connected to the flesh as a significant part of our identity. We may agree we are not our own, and insist we are never alone, but when the rubber hits the road, we show signs of being disconnected from the power and peace of Christ in God.

'As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in

all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.’

1 Pet 1:14-19

Any evidence of the flesh, any hint of anger, pride or isolation, any fear, any anxiety or despair, indicates our real depth of understanding needs further development to include the Spirit of Christ to be abiding in us as the power of God unto righteousness. These things should serve as a warning alarm that we have taken our eyes off God.

Now, since God is all powerful with absolute sovereign authority over all things, and since He dwells in us by His Spirit, then the only way we can fail to reflect His life is when we don't live by faith, but live as if we have spiritual amnesia and walk as if we are alone.

Therefore we must believe God who insists we are indeed His children who have been crucified with Christ and reborn with the divine nature in order to live with the Spirit of Christ in God.

We need to wake every morning with the intent of living according to what God has already done, and remember we are joined together with Christ by the all powerful work of the Holy Spirit. God can't fail. Every failure we see is a failure of our faith through unbelief and disobedience to comply with the revealed will of God in Christ.

Every Christian has all of Christ available to them all the time. Every Christian has God indwelling in them with Christ all the time. When we consider other Christians, we must consider Christ to be with them all the time.

When we think of ourselves we must recognise we are a single unit with Christ in God who is our sovereign Lord. With this in mind we should not forget we live on holy ground for God lives here in us all the time. We should also not presume on God by saying

He is our friend, He is our Lord and Master, who treats us as His friends.

The Christ life is a new testament

Sometimes we can have a problem of perception in that we often read so much of the Bible from the perspective that God is up there somewhere. References to God and the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament are made from the point of view that God is far above. This is the time before the Spirit was given to indwell the believer in the New Testament. So if we are not careful we will fail to understand the Old Testament from the more informed New Testament.

Understanding the work of God in the lives of the chosen people from the view given us by God in the New Testament gives us a whole new understanding to what is true for the brothers and sisters in Christ. The unity enjoyed by the Father, Son, and Spirit, now includes the children of God.

When we speak to brothers and sisters, we need to keep in mind we are also dealing with the indwelling Spirit of God. When we

consider other Christians, we must consider God to be with them.

The Christ life means we represent Christ

We have escaped the corruption of sinful desire to become partakers of the divine nature. (2 Pet 1:3-4) Not two natures but one with God. There must be no confusion, if we have died with Christ we have received His life as our life, we have God, our body is a temple of God.

All those who have died with Christ are our brothers and sisters who have God, who now represent Christ, be respectful of this, and give thanks to God.

Whether they know it or not, all those in Christ have God, and should be treated accordingly. Do we treat others like we know God is with them? Do we treat unbelievers as those who desperately need to be born of God so they too can have eternal life?

This work of God enables us to live according to His written word. This means the words of Christ for His disciples are abundantly doable.

The teaching of Jesus Christ explains what God has in mind for us to do when we are in Him by the giving of the Spirit of God. It is written: *'The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'*

Rom 8:4

The sermon on the mountain shows us how the children of God are enabled to live in obedience to God the Father. These teachings of the Lord are His explanation of how the law of God is to be personally experienced through obedience by all those who follow Him because they trust in Him for strength.

Walking in the Spirit is the only way to live as a child of God under His sovereign control and leadership. Considering that the word of God is a revelation from God for the training and development of His chosen people, it is therefore able to be obeyed and implemented by those who no longer live in the flesh but are led and empowered by His Spirit of holiness. The Spirit helps us know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge that we may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Obedience to God will inevitably cause suffering, but there is never a time when the children of God are not enclosed in His presence. So it is always God's purpose that we are comforted by His love. Regardless of what difficulty we face, nothing can shake us from the security of God's sovereign authority and power.

Rom 8:35-39

God has a master plan for those who overcome the flesh and the world by walking as Christ walked by the power of the Spirit. God is uniquely perfect and without blemish, He is all powerful, and it is His plan to make us to be completely formed into the likeness of Christ, so that we can rule with Christ in the new heaven and earth while sitting with Him on His throne. Therefore Christ' holiness is to be increasingly seen in the children of God.

Just as Jesus Christ is the exact representation of God the Father, the children of God are destined to become complete reflections of Christ in God. God's children will be clothed in the beauty of God's holiness. We must look forward to the living promise of God, and

never look back with interest to the dead past that is crucified with Christ.

We were born into sin and dishonour by the natural working of the flesh, but this is not to remain as it was. *'It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.'*

1 Cor 15:43-44

We represent Christ to each other as we seek to build up each one as Christ's ambassadors to the world.

We represent Christ to the world so we speak of the plan of God to reconcile the world through the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of all who will believe and obey Him as Lord and God. We represent Christ in everything we do in our community knowing we do this in the presence of Christ as His servants on earth.

When we are at work, we do all things in a way that is honouring to Christ. When we are out and about we always represent Christ and His mission on earth.

We represent Christ in our homes so that we treat each other as Christ would nurture them in His love.

How much difference would there be if all Christians treated each other as living bearers of God to the church? How much improvement would there be in the ministry of the church if everyone used their God given spiritual gifts? How much more evangelism would take place if all Christians acted as bearers of God to the world? How much more desire would there be for the fullness of maturity if all Christians followed the Spirit's leading? How much more would the world see Christ in us if we all lived the Christ life as provided by God?

This is not just a spiritual fantasy. *'When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.'*

Col 3:4

And what does this mean for Christian unity? All Christians would speak with one voice as the Spirit of Christ gives the same truth to each one. How much more would the church be what Christ designed it to be?

As with all aspects of our growing in holiness, the fullness of the Spirit is something we work towards daily through faithful obedience. Wouldn't it be a tremendous blessing if we all worked daily towards our potential for the kingdom of God? Not to mention the harmony and brotherly love that would shine like a full moon even in the darkest hour.

The problem we face is that many are not at all actively working on their growth in holiness on a daily basis by putting on the life of Christ while guarding their thinking.

Regardless of where we are today as individuals, we are obligated to be working together with each other towards the fullness of maturity in Christ.

Diligence in spiritual growth cannot be said to be taking place if the only time given to that work is one hour on Sunday. The Holy Spirit is interested in our moment by moment commitment to spiritual growth and development in our service to God.

Operating as we truly are in Christ means we will feel God's constant pleasure.

The apostle Peter warns those of us who have entered into a relationship with Jesus that we are to remember we are not who we used to be, we have been cleansed from our old sins and we have a new life with a new purpose. We cannot fail to grow in Christ and be comfortable with ourselves. *'For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.'* 2 Pet 1:9

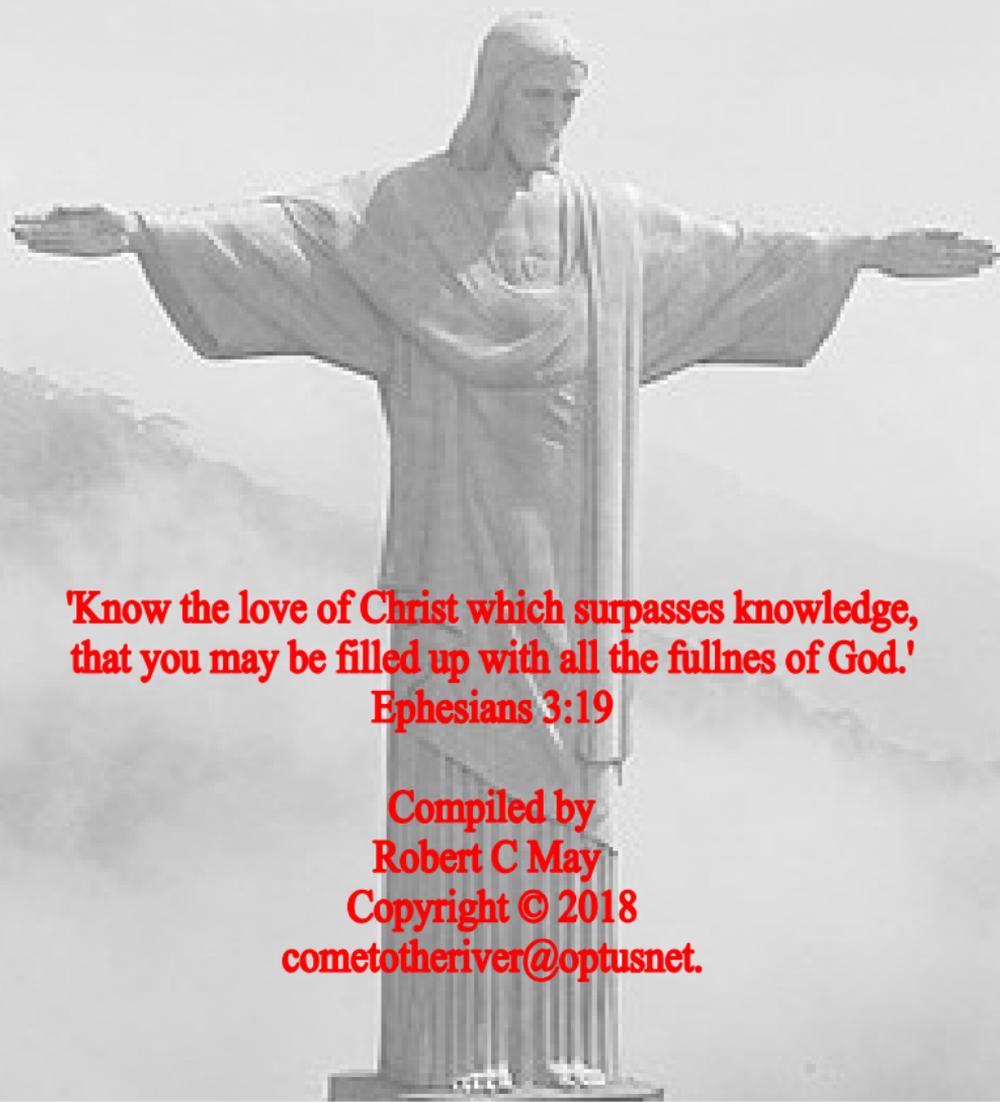
How much more delight would we have in serving each other in the Lord, if we could just remember when we serve one another we are actually serving God Himself at the same time.

How many more people would see the light of God in Christ through His disciples if we lived the Christ life by loving them as we love each other?

Brothers and sisters, Christ is our life, live His life with all your heart, mind and strength.

Abide in Him

Living Water Resources Come to the River



**'Know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge,
that you may be filled up with all the fullness of God.'**

Ephesians 3:19

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