

# The Christian

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THE word *Christian* is first used as a noun. It is never used in the Bible as an adjective. Expressions such as "speaking a *Christian* word" or "doing a *Christian* deed" are not found in the Bible. The word *Christian* is used only three times in the Bible. In the phrase "the disciples were called Christians," the word *Christians* is plural. Individually, each disciple was a Christian.

Citizens of America are spoken of as Americans. Each individual is an American. Because there are Americans in the world there is an American way of life. We speak of American habits and American ideas, but that is all secondary. There must first be Americans before there can be American ideas and an American way of conduct.

A man can be a Christian and not look and act like one. A person can be a Christian even though he has not yet learned to walk in the ways of a Christian. Many years ago, I became a soldier in Canada. I walked into the recruiting office, signed a paper, and walked out a soldier. I knew nothing as yet about soldiering. I did not know how to march, how to clean a rifle, or how to keep my tent. I had no knowledge of army regulations. But I was a soldier. I became a soldier by signing an agreement stating that I would serve in the Canadian army for the duration of the war and six months thereafter.

Two people marry. They have the certificate signed by the minister and the witnesses, but the man may not as yet act like a husband. He may become a father, but he may not act like a father. He may act like a stranger, even if he is a father.

## HIS FAITH

Normally speaking, a Christian will grow in faith and understanding; and he will begin to act like a Christian *after* he has become one. A Christian is a person in whom God is working by His grace, according to His promises in Christ Jesus. There is no such thing as a Christian in whose heart God is not working. The Christian acquires certain characteristics as God works in his heart. He will develop Christian faith. He starts out by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christian faith is believing in Christ and committing oneself to Him in all aspects of life. The Christian believes in Christ as He is presented in the Bible. The Christian believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that as the Son of God He did, does and will do certain things.

When it is said that a Christian believes in God, it means that he believes in the God of our fathers, the God of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He believes that the whole universe was created by God, but he believes far more about God than that He is Creator. He believes the Creator is a Person and that this Person is holy, just, and good. The Ten Commandments are His law. However, believing these truths does not make a man a Christian. The Christian believes that God was in Jesus Christ and that Jesus of Nazareth, who was born in Bethlehem, who lived thirty years on earth, who died on Calvary's cross, and who arose from the dead, was the Son of God. A Christian believes that God was in Christ Jesus "reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). He specifically believes that God is his Father.

It is a common thing in our day and time to assume that the Fatherhood of God refers to God's kindness to all people. God is kind to all people as Creator, Keeper, Provider, and Sustainer, but He is the Father, in a special way, of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Christian considers God as Father, he is thinking of the One who begets him. The Christian is born again of God. What the

Christian believes about God in a special way is that God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes his Father. The Christian is adopted into the family of God as His child. "And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:18).

The Christian also believes certain things about Jesus Christ. It is not enough for a Christian to believe that Jesus of Nazareth lived, that He was a good man, that He was the Son of God, or that God was His Father in the sense that He is everybody's Father. The Christian must believe that Jesus Christ is God. When the Christian worships God the Father, he worships God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He accepts Jesus Christ and believes Him to be his sacrifice for sin. He believes that because Jesus Christ died on Calvary's cross God will forgive the Christian; and so he will say that Christ's death has brought him forgiveness from sin. He believes that the Lord Jesus Christ is his Saviour day by day *now* because *He* is alive in resurrection power. The Bible teaches that Christ Jesus is "also able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). The Christian also believes that Jesus Christ is the Lord of his life, so that every day his life is directed by Him. A person who becomes intelligent about himself as a Christian understands that the living Lord Jesus Christ will guide him, and so he prays to God to find out what the Father wants him to do, and counts on the Lord Jesus Christ to guide his steps. Jesus said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). He said, "I will come again, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). He said to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature and "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). The Christian also believes that Christ Jesus is the coming Judge of all the world, but that He will always be the Companion and Friend of those who put their trust in Him. The Christian has the comforting assurance that "whosoever will" may put trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

Concerning the Holy Spirit, the Christian believes that He is a Person, that He is God, and that He has been sent to believers in a way that can be learned, even if the believer never fully understands. The Christian believes that God has given the Holy Spirit into his heart so that He dwells within him and the believer's "body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). He believes that the Holy Spirit as a Person can be grieved. As a Person, the Holy Spirit is also to be obeyed. The Christian wants to do what he is inwardly led by the Holy Spirit to do. He comes to understand that the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God as "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17). The Holy Spirit makes the Scriptures alive to the believer and thus guides him in the revealed will of God.

What else does a Christian believe? He believes all things that the Scriptures teach. This will include believing that Jesus Christ is coming again. He believes that all men will stand before God to be judged. He believes that Almighty God is over all things – His eye is on the Christians and He will not let them be destroyed. The Christian understands that death is not the end of anything. He has found out through Jesus Christ on Calvary that death does not stop the soul and that the believer will go right on into the presence of God. He believes that the Lord Jesus Christ is alive and waiting for him. The Christian understands that he can call upon God and that God will answer him because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has promised. The Christian expects to go to heaven to be with the Lord.

## REGENERATION

Regeneration is something very important in a Christian's life and experience. When we are thinking about Christians, we need to remember that everybody is not a Christian. No one is born of human parents as a Christian. It is not a matter of background, or family, or community which makes me a Christian. All kinds of people can be found in any society, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, kind and cruel, civilized and savage. But Christians are found only among those who have heard the Gospel.

A Christian has been "born again." "Born again" means that I have experienced a spiritual renewal – *regeneration*. When I am regenerated, something new has been begun in me. There are differences of

opinion as to when regeneration happens. Some people think that it happens before I believe, while others think that it takes place after I believe in Christ. They may have different ideas about the time when it happens; but all agree that if I am to be a Christian, I must be regenerated. Actually it is when I am regenerated that I really become a Christian. It is because I am regenerated, which means "born again," that I am able to walk with the Lord and to be with Him.

Regeneration may take place in me in such a way that I do not notice it as it happens. This need not puzzle me. When I was born the first time, I did not know it. It is like that in regeneration. It is quite possible for God to begin working in me before I am conscious of it.

Another word that is often used to refer to this phase of Christian experience is *conversion*. The word *conversion* is used very little in the Bible. The general idea in the word is that of being *turned around*. If it is as if when I was going north I turned and started going south. So I was going away from God, and now I am going to God. This involves a change of attitude in my heart, a turning around in the way in which I want to go. Speaking of my conversion, I could say something like this: "I was converted at 8:30 p.m. on October 12, 1915." I would be saying that at that time I changed my mind and turned around with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, many people cannot name the exact date on which their conversion occurred. In my case, I was looking toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and I wanted to come to Him for weeks before I could see my way clearly. I suppose that in my case the word *illumination* would be better. *Illumination* can be used to refer to the experience of the heart, mind, and consciousness when I saw the truth which before was hidden from me. I suppose I had been converted earlier. Only God, not I, knows when I was regenerated. But something must have happened to me before this, or else I would not have had that new disposition within me which made me want to come to God.

When I was born as a child, I had a human nature. Human beings behave in various ways, but, generally speaking, they are selfish. Starting as a baby, I reached for things to *take*. If I live to be eighty, I will still be reaching, a little bit slower perhaps, but still reaching. I will not be able to grab quite so tightly, but I can take hold and I am going to hang on to everything I have. This is human nature, but it is not divine nature. When I am born again, it is to the praise of God and to the joy of the Christian that I will find within me promptings to want to do what is pleasing to Him "who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

As a Christian I want to be pleasing in the sight of God. Instead of just taking things for myself, I find joy in *giving* to others. This is not something that I can learn as a human being. My human heart will be struggling with the thought: why should I be giving to someone who has never given anything to me? After all, it would be natural to seek to make a profit on any deal. But as a Christian I have the disposition to give to another person because I care about that person, and that person needs what I am giving. This act of giving is a response to the grace of God – God cares. The man I am helping may not be lovely, but God loves him, and God wants me to do for him. He is not good, but God wants to save him. God is like this because of His grace. This is the new disposition that I have when I have been born again. This may not always show up immediately in one's attitude toward other people, but it will come.

Regeneration is the method by which God changes me. I am born again from within; I belong to God, and now I want to be well-pleasing in His sight. As a new creature I grow by feeding on the promises of God, considering the grace of God, worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ, and walking with Him. In this new nature I want to be with God and His people. I want to do God's will and share in God's work, helping to spread the Gospel and seeing other people saved. This is the divine nature which was in the Lord Jesus Christ, who came "to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). When I become a Christian, I find that this new nature is beginning to influence my ideas and to affect my actions.

## JUSTIFICATION

*Justification* is a common word used in speaking of the Christian experience. It is a Bible word. In order to understand the word *justification*, it is necessary to understand the word *just*. The English word *just* has in it a very simple idea. When a man is *just*, he is right. He is what he ought to be.

God is just. God is always fair. He deals with every man alike. There are no favorites with God. He is not one way one day and another way another day. He is the same all the time. He is exactly what He is in Himself, and He is always that way. You can depend on Him.

No man in himself is just. Human beings are devious. If God is like a straight line, man is not straight. If God is exactly perpendicular, man leans to one side or the other. Men who break the law are described as being crooked. They are not just. If they were just, they would be straight; but they naturally deviate from the law. When we say "All have sinned," we mean that all have deviated from the straight. All have transgressed. They have all failed and "come short." "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6).

The whole Bible teaches us that God wants to have fellowship with man. But God is holy and just, and man is not. Man is a sinner, and God's holy eyes are such that they cannot look on sin. God can deal only with just men. That creates a problem. If God cannot have fellowship with a sinner, and "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," how can God find anybody with whom he can have fellowship? Humanly speaking, there would be no man with whom God could live. This is where the Gospel brings relief. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He is able to take unrighteous people and make them righteous: unjust people and make them just. He is able to take sinners and make them fit for God. To be *justified* before God is to receive complete forgiveness of all sins and to be permanently reinstated to a place of favor and privilege with God.

The word *justify* is ordinarily used in the following manner. When someone does something he should not do, he is called in and asked to give a reason for his actions. When he begins explaining, he is trying to justify himself: trying to make himself what he ought to be by arguing that he did not do wrong at all. But this is not the way God justifies. God does not say that whatever I have done is all right. God admits that what man did was wrong, but He can fix it so that the wrong which the man did will not stand between man and Himself. This does not mean that God will excuse man or alibi for him. Sin is awful in the sight of God, but God is able to remove that sin. He is able to carry it away through Christ, who is the substitution for sinful man. Christ is the sacrifice for sin.

Sacrifice means that the penalty of death which should have fallen upon the sinner falls upon a substitute. In the Old Testament a lamb was the sacrifice. The death that should have come to the sinner came to the lamb, an innocent animal, and the man was set free. In God's dealing with man this principle is always true. God will let someone else pay the sinner's bill. When the sinner's name comes up in the presence of Almighty God, the Lord Jesus Christ steps in, and bears the sin in His own body so that man goes free. The result is that man is then treated by God as if he had not done anything wrong. God knows he did wrong. The man knows he did wrong. The Lord Jesus Christ knows the man did wrong, but the man is made *just* in the sight of God.

A word which means much the same as justification is *reconciliation*, the method by which Christ Jesus brings a sinful man to the Father. *Reconciliation* is not a matter of affecting the emotions and the mind. Christ is reconciling me to the Father when He brings us together in such a way that the holy Father can deal with me as if there were nothing against me before Him. The reason I do not have anything against me is that the Lord Jesus Christ paid my fine. I am not justified because of anything I do, but I am justified because of what Christ Jesus did.

Having been justified before God and reconciled to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ, now that I am a Christian, I have a change in attitude. I am grateful to God and I want to bow down and worship God with thanksgiving and praise. As a Christian I am also guided from within by an impulse to serve God, "to

will and to do of His good pleasure."

## SANCTIFICATION

*Sanctification* refers to what God does in and for the believer. God does things for all people everywhere. He is the Creator of the whole world, and His grace and providence overrule throughout everything. His sun shines on the good and the bad, and His rain falls on the just and the unjust. There is not a human being on earth who does not have dealings with God. But God has prepared special things for those who will commit themselves to Him through believing in Jesus Christ. God will work the wonders of His grace in Christ Jesus for me if I will yield to Him.

*Sanctification* is the work of God in which the believer is set apart for God alone. When any object of any kind is set apart for an exclusive use, it is *sanctified*. The Bible speaks not only of human beings as sanctified, but also of buildings, vessels, utensils, and days.

What is the meaning of the word *sanctuary*? The word *sanctuary* designates a room, a building, set apart for the exclusive use of worshipping God. The Sabbath Day is a *sanctified* day. A day cannot have morals; a golden vessel cannot have morals. Being *sanctified* is not a matter of morality. Being *sanctified* means being set apart for a particular use.

Some people may have a few *sanctified* items in their homes. These are the few items which are used for a certain purpose and are not used for anything else. Do you have in your kitchen a special cup or a particular knife that you have set aside for one specific purpose only, and it is not to be used for anything else? What you have really done is to *sanctify* that article. As simple as it sounds, that is what *sanctified* really means.

When I recognize that I have been bought by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am not my own, I belong to God and am to be used for nothing but for God's purposes alone – this is what is meant by my being sanctified. Any man that is so set aside for God is a *saint*. The word *saint* is the noun of which the word *sanctified* is the verb. *Sanctify* is to set apart for a special use, and the man who is so set apart is a *saint*.

In our common language, we are inclined to speak of a person as a saint if he has achieved a high excellence of spiritual performance. But actually anyone who is set aside for the exclusive use of God will get to be a better man. It will not be long before all manner of moral virtue and spiritual excellence will be found in anybody who is set aside only for the use of God, Whenever anyone turns his mind and heart over to God and seeks to please Him, and has nothing in mind at all except that God's will be done, others will soon see moral excellence, personal virtue, and spiritual excellence in that person. When others see this, they say of such a person, "Why, he is a real saint." And we can understand what they mean, but that is not the true meaning of the word.

A person first *becomes* a Christian and then God begins to work in that person so that he can *act* like a Christian. In sanctification, God sets me apart for Himself. He wants me to serve Him. He wants to be the sole owner of my heart and mind. When I turn myself around to God, wanting above everything else to please Him, God will make me into a person who will act as if I belong to Him. Moral, ethical and spiritual virtues begin to appear in me.

If you live in that way for a length of time, you will become conscious of God. You will want to please Him. He bought you with His blood; He saved you from your sins; He is going to deliver you from going to hell; and He is going to bring you to heaven with Him. There is nothing now between you and the Father in heaven, and you can really and truly come into His presence at any time. As you do that, it will affect you in such a way that you will change your ideas. You will have new notions and new thoughts, in which you want to please Him.

When all these results are added up, they are called *holiness*. The English word *holy* can well be understood if the word *wholly* is remembered. *Entirely* is the meaning of the word *wholly*. I used to think

that the word *holy* referred to a person who lived an exceptionally godly life – a person who was just perfect. If such were the case, how could anyone be holy? Yet we are told to be holy. Shall we think that God is asking me to do something that I cannot do? Who then can be saved? But by *holiness* we mean that I am *wholly, totally* given over to God. I can take that step on any day in my Christian experience. After I have surrendered to God as a sinner, certain changes will follow; but I repeat: What makes me *holy* even while I am yet a sinner is that I turn myself over altogether to God.

This is a wonderful thing. I can turn myself over to God just as I am. Suppose I am not much; I can turn that over. Suppose I am not even a faithful person; I can turn that over. God will straighten me out. I must turn myself completely over to God as I am, trusting in nothing else except God and yielding myself into His will. Certain results will follow in me and those results will be *holiness*. *Holiness* is the consequence of being *holy*, which is a matter of giving myself totally over to God.

I can start from anywhere in life. The Scriptures say: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). Anybody any time can turn himself entirely over to God. The act of yielding to God is being "sanctified in the Lord." Belonging to God is being a *saint*, being entirely His is being *holy* and the result in one's life will be called *holiness*.

## GLORIFICATION

In addition to justification and sanctification, a third word used to describe what God does for a Christian is *glorification*. To understand the word *glorification*, one first must have a clear idea of the word *glory*, because glorification is that work of God in a believer which results in the glory of God. We use the word *glory* very little in everyday talk, and so it may sound strange to our ears. But what it means is not so hard to understand. Any time I reach my goal, any time I manage to do what I want to do, any time I succeed in any effort I have undertaken – such are times of glory for me. The Hebrew word has in it the idea of harvest, especially the *joy of the harvest*. I grew up as a boy on a farm. I learned the hard way that farmers suffer many disappointments. Sometimes our harvest was poor and for a whole year we would suffer because of the shortage of money that resulted. Yet harvest time always seemed to be a time of rejoicing and gladness. The work of the whole year was now to be rewarded with the harvest. This was *glory time* for the farmer.

There may be even more meaning to this word in the way it is 9 used in the Bible, but this will do to give us an idea of what is meant by the *glory* of God. God has in mind to bless us. He works in us to that end. When He succeeds in His work and actually produces in us the performance of His will as it was done in Christ Jesus, He is glorified in us. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8).

To many people the word *glory* may possibly mean something only in heaven. The Book of Revelation does show us that heaven is filled with God's glory, but the glory of God is also to be seen on the earth during our lifetime.

In the Westminster Shorter Catechism, one of the questions is, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is, "To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Personally, for many years I had in mind that that meant that after man died and went to heaven he would join with others to increase the glory of God. I didn't know how it would be done, but I thought saved men would glorify God by somehow increasing the magnificence of the glory of the light that shines around the throne in heaven. But the chief end of man "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever" takes place in this life. Man does not have to wait until heaven for this to happen. Some people are waiting for heaven for everything they are to get. But the glorious fact is that we do not have to wait until we leave this world to share in the glory of God. Some of that can happen here now.

The Christian is to bear fruit here on earth. Christ Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches.

He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5). The glory of a wheat field is the bushels of golden grain. The glory of an apple orchard is the barrels of ripe apples. The glory of a man is the prime fullness of his strength. The fulfillment of anything is the glory of it. God is glorified when His plans work out and when what He does pays off in results.

God did not send His Son into the world only to save men from hell in the future. God could have fixed it so that I would never go to hell by simply not making me. In that case the Lord Jesus would never have had to die. But if God wanted me for Himself, and created me so that I would be with Him in eternity, and if it happened that I would be condemned to destruction because of my sin and so I would need to be saved, then Christ Jesus died not only to save me from hell but to take me to heaven.

A housewife goes to the hardware store and buys a kettle for cooking purposes. She takes it out of the store. Now no one can use it for carrying nails and bolts. The housewife has bought the kettle, and it is now hers. She has bought it to use and not merely to put on a shelf to show her neighbors she has a kettle. However, until something is put into the kettle, and it is used for cooking, its purpose has not been fulfilled.

Christ Jesus came into the world and died for me to save me from hell and to save me for heaven. The important thing is that I should belong to God and let Him have His way in my heart. When I let God have His way in me to work out His purposes through me, I will show His glory. He will produce in me the fruit of the Spirit. The word *fruit* is singular, and it means at least nine different things. A person cannot have one and not have the other eight. Anyone who has *love* in his heart will have *joy*, and anyone who has *love* and *joy* will have *peace*. The person who has love, joy, and peace will be inclined to be *long-suffering*, and the long-suffering person will be *gentle*. The gentle person will be *good*, and a good person will find that he can trust God. A *trusting* person will be *meek*, and a meek person will have *self-control* (temperance). These nine fruits of the Spirit are like grapes on a stem; when the stem is picked up, all the grapes are picked up at the same time. The fruit of the Spirit, these nine aspects of a Christian's nature, is the result of God's working in the heart. Man does not aim at these things; he does not try to do them. They simply are his if he belongs to Christ and yields to the Holy Spirit.

There are many, many people who wear themselves out trying to enjoy themselves. Sad and bitter is the dark brown taste they have in their mouths the next day from trying to enjoy themselves. Joy is the gift of God for those who commit themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. He will *give* joy within that will bubble up in the heart. There are times when a Christian feels so good he will not be able to understand what is happening to him. He realizes his circumstances and knows that at that particular time he ought not to feel good at all; but he does. The reason for this is that the Christian has an inner quietness and peace. He has a confidence which is his strength. He has a love spread abroad in his heart in such a way that he feels good all over. This is not his own doing. God does it in him.

Were you ever in love? You will remember that nobody could make you mad then. Nothing made you downhearted or gloomy. The sun shone a little brighter; the flowers smelled more fragrant and everything was sweeter in the days when you first found love. A Christian person falls in love with the Lord and never gets over it. This love grows and grows and grows. The more there is of love in the heart the less a man cares about what happens on the outside. People may say such a man does not have good sense. He acts as if there is nothing the matter when he may be in real trouble. He does not seem to notice his hard circumstances. He has the fruit of the Spirit in him – love, joy, peace, etc. This is the result of God's working in the heart, and such results glorify God.

Glory will come in heaven. The Christian may look forward to it. There will be joy, peace, gladness, and singing. But this can be his earthly experience also, if he will yield himself to God, and let God have His way in his heart to work out His will in that life to His own name's honor and glory. That is what we mean by *glorification*.

## COMMUNION

There are at least two ideas that come to our minds when we speak of *communion*. The first is that of the *Communion Supper* and the second is the *communion of saints*, mentioned in the Apostles' Creed. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is referred to as the *Communion Supper* because at the Lord's table the individual Christian enters into the close, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ which we call *communion*.

When Christians profess their faith, using the words of the Apostles' Creed, they say they believe in "the communion of saints." By this term they refer to the fellowship of believers with each other. Whenever Christians gather together in the name of the Lord, there is what is meant by the *communion* of saints.

The word *communion* commonly refers to daily experience with the Lord. It is a face-to-face, person-to-person relationship. The prefix *com* means "to come or bring together," and the word *union* means "as one." *Communion*, therefore, means "to bring together into one." This is to be seen when two little girls skip down the street together. They skip along arm in arm and exactly in unison. They may be said to be skipping in *communion*. Sometimes as boys walk along they put their arms around each other, and they walk exactly in step, foot by foot, step by step. Perhaps you have experienced sitting with a friend and after a time of silence you began to talk and your friend said that she had been thinking about that very thing. That shows that you and your friend were in communion with each other. Communion is an intimate relationship where two or more people feel alike and act together.

Communion is in evidence when people are singing. When a great many people sing the same words at the same time on the same pitch, they are singing in unison. Singing together in the different parts assigned to different voices is singing in harmony. However, this enters into the meaning of communion, for in it is involved everything that would convey the idea of blending together and doing the same thing at the same time. The word *rhythm* is also helpful to the meaning. In the army, men are trained to march, because it is a fact that if a man marches in step with other men, he can walk longer and with greater ease than if he is walking on his own. The rhythm will carry a soldier on after he is tired out. In *communion*, the Christian is in step with Christ.

The same thought is illustrated by two young people in love. They think the same things, they feel the same way, and there is a certain joy and sweetness of fellowship between them. What causes it? It is the joy they have in being with the particular person whom they happen to be with. It happens with husband and wife. The Scriptures say, "They shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). The ambition of every young couple thinking of getting married should be that they will live in communion with each other. When husband and wife live in communion, there are two equals living together. If a young man were thinking of getting married and came to talk with me about it, I would urge the young man to remember that from his wedding day on he will never be able to be by himself. In everything he will do, he will have a partner. This means that his thoughts, ideas, and actions will not be his alone. There will be another person sharing with him in all these things. When two people are in communion, they experience an increased dimension of joy and strength. It is more than fellowship, for communion describes the relationship of two people being together as one.

In the Christians' relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, even more is true. Christians are together with Him like husband and wife – He is the Bridegroom and they are the bride – but there is a difference, because He is the Lord and they are the servants. He is the "head of the body," and the Christians are the members of the body; and yet they are both in one body and they belong together.

The experience of communion is developed and strengthened by the practice of worship. In worship the person focuses the attention of his heart and mind upon the one to be worshipped. In worship a person looks upon some one person and prefers that one above all others: that one comes first. Not only is that one preferred, but he is adored. When I think only of one person and give him my adoration, I enjoy and appreciate that person's beauty, and he becomes very valuable to me. This is what I do when I worship

the Lord Jesus Christ. I bow down before Him in my heart and gaze upon Him. I consider the things which He did. He healed the leper; He opened the eyes of the blind; He forgave the woman taken in sin; He was patient with the woman at the well. He went into the house of Mary and Martha and raised Lazarus from the dead. He knew He was going to raise Lazarus, yet at the graveside He wept in sympathy with these people because of their sorrow and grief. In this way I think on the actions of Christ. I watch and gaze upon them. I esteem those truths as the most important things in the whole world and in that way I worship Christ. Worship leads me to say, "I'd do anything for Him." The experience of worship contributes to communion.

Gazing into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ and letting everything that is within my heart esteem and appreciate Him will lead to prayer. In no other exercise can I have fellowship with the Lord as much as through praying. Christ Himself is constantly praying for me and for others. In my time of communion with the Lord, I will be moved to act as Christ acted when He was here upon earth.

Whenever I tell people about the Lord and invite them to come to church, I am doing what Christ did, and in this way I am walking with Him. Helping the poor, caring for the sick, and visiting the infirm or those who are in trouble is what Christ would do and when I do these things I am walking with Him. Anything I do by way of service to Christ in which I move in His will is communion with Him.

The Lord Jesus worshipped the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ looked out upon human beings and felt sympathy for them. The Lord Jesus undertook to win people to God. If I do these things, I am like Christ. When people rebuked, reviled, and persecuted Him, the Lord Jesus opened not His mouth. If I am patient under persecution, I am like Christ and in that I have communion with Him. The Lord Jesus gave everything He had – He gave Himself – on behalf of other people. If I do this, I am like Him.

When people discredit the Bible, when they criticize Christianity and make fun of the things of God, when they slander the Lord Jesus Christ, I may take this to heart as though they were criticizing, slurring, and casting shame upon me. In communion I share with Christ. Anyone who repudiates the Lord Jesus Christ repudiates me. The glorious part of communion is that if I walk with Him here in this life He will keep me with Him in the world to come.

## GROWING IN GRACE

When a person becomes a Christian, he starts living a new life. The new Christian, being young in faith, is referred to as a *babe* in Christ. After a baby is born, it is natural for it to start to grow. All parents try to make sure that their child is growing normally. In the life of the Christian, the idea of growing is also very important. The term commonly used in speaking of the Christian's increase in knowledge, understanding, and practice of spiritual truths is "growing in grace."

In this world, living things never start out full-grown. Apple trees begin as seedlings and grow to be apple trees. Horses begin as colts and grow to be horses. Dogs begin as puppies and grow to be dogs. People start out as boys and girls and grow to be men and women. Shortly after a baby is born, it is given a name. Suppose the baby is a boy and he is named John Brown. John Brown grows as any normal boy will grow. When he is five years old he will be much taller and heavier than when he was born, but he is still John Brown. When he is ten, fifteen, twenty years old, he is still John Brown, but he has grown into the possibilities that were in him when he was a baby. Christians start as *babes* and they grow to be in the fullness of the stature of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:13). They are Christians all the while, but they grow.

All living things grow, although they may not grow for the entire length of their lives. Some things grow until they are full-grown. A boy does not grow for forty years. He grows for about twenty years, and at the end of that time he has reached his height and is thought to be full-grown. Apple trees will grow, and they will start bearing apples after a couple of years, at which time they are considered mature apple trees. They may live for twenty years and have good seasons and poor seasons. New branches will come

out, old branches will break off, but the apple tree is a mature apple tree all that time. But a Christian should never stop growing. From the time a person is born again, there should be growth. Even though a person may be considered by other people to be a mature Christian in terms of his understanding of Bible teaching, there is still room for growth and development, for the riches of God's wisdom extend beyond any goal that man may ever attain.

Everybody knows that all babies do mainly three important things. They eat, sleep, and grow. All three are necessary for the baby to grow normal and healthy. The prayer of all Christian parents for their children is that they would be healthy and grow and be and do the best they can. A person grows by taking food into the body. The food is assimilated, making strong bones, muscles, tissues, and nerves. If a baby does not receive sufficient food, its growth will be stunted. It will not grow to full proportions. Sickness can also stunt a child's growth.

I have a brother who was sickly until he was eleven or twelve years of age. Our father was five feet ten inches tall and all our uncles on our mother's side were six feet tall or more, but my brother is a good deal shorter than I am, and I am scarcely five feet ten inches tall. People speak of my brother as a short man. He has breadth, but he never grew very tall. I think he never grew to his possible size because of his time of sickness as a child. This is the sort of thing that sometimes happens with Christians. After I become a Christian, I need to feed on the Word of God that I may grow and develop in my Christian life. If anything interferes with my Bible study and my prayer life, I may never be all I could have been in the Lord.

The Book of Hebrews sets forth the Idea of what the milk of the Word is. It has to do with great doctrines – repentance, faith, forgiveness of sins, cleansing, the filling of the Holy Spirit, judgment, heaven. These are things a young Christian should learn. When I become a Christian, I need to think about heaven. I am saved from hell, but I am saved to heaven. God will judge me. I will be forgiven by the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's blood was shed for my sins. God gives His Holy Spirit to me. I am to believe in God. I am to count myself in the presence of God at all times. I am to judge my daily life in the presence of God. That is milk. A young Christian needs to think on those things. In so doing, he will grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

It is a sad experience to see a child that has never matured. Such a child may be twelve years old, but have the mind of a three-year-old. Even though the body may be healthy and strong, the mind may not be developed. Everyone will pity this child and sympathize with the parents. What happened? We say this is a case of retarded development. The child simply did not grow up.

This is what it is like when Christians do not grow up. Christians should encourage one another to "grow in grace and in knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." *Growing in grace* does not mean that the Christian becomes sweeter, more gentle, kind, loving, and peaceful as time goes by. These things will take place, because they are the fruits of the Spirit. But to *grow in grace* is to become more and more conscious of the presence of the Lord. Every moment of every day the mature Christian remembers that Christ is his Saviour. The reality of Christ's death and the forgiveness of God enter into the Christian's mind in such a way that he wants to be obedient and well-pleasing in God's sight. This is maturity.

Some years ago a missionary who was a former student of mine wrote to me and asked, "What can I do to feed my soul while I am on the mission field? I believe all the Gospel, I preach it, I teach it, and I want to help the natives to come to know it; but I find myself inwardly feeling weak, and I do not feel that I am as strong as I could be. For that reason, I know I need to grow in spiritual things." My answer to that young man was, "Read and study the Bible." By this I meant: Read the Old Testament instances of how God dealt with His people. Read through the life of the Bible characters and watch what happened when they walked with God and also watch what happened when they disobeyed God. Notice what happened when they needed help and when, how, and for what they prayed. Then notice how God answered their prayers. By doing this, the missionary would be feeding on the Word of God.

Just as one takes food – bread, meat, fruit, and milk – into his body, and the body grows and becomes strong, so it is with the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ by feeding upon the Word of God and taking into myself the truth of Christ's death for men, Christ's resurrection from the dead, Christ's promise that if men believe in Him they too will be raised from the dead, Christ's presence with God, Christ's continued praying for believers, and Christ's giving of the Holy Spirit to Christians, enabling them to walk with Him day by day. In this way the grace of God will abound in my heart and so I will become a healthy, strong, constantly growing Christian.

## SERVICE

The word *service* is best understood when it is remembered that the person who serves is a servant. A servant is one who waits on another. It may be stated very simply that a servant is one who runs an errand. A servant is someone who will do what he is told. The trouble with some servants is that they want to become bosses and do as they see fit, instead of doing the service which they should do.

Some years ago when I was a schoolteacher, I attended a meeting at which the speaker was the man who was acting as principal of a school attached to the New York Stock Exchange. This particular school is for the purpose of training the pages, the boys who run errands at the Stock Exchange. The boys are chosen from all over the United States, and obviously are chosen only because they are the very smartest boys. They are put on a salary basis immediately; and they draw full wages while they attend orientation courses at this school. The principal asked us what we thought was emphasized in the school courses during this period. We had no idea and yet we were surprised when he explained that the courses are especially designed to drill the boys to do *exactly what* they are told *exactly when* they are told to do it. They have assignments that require them to do things at precise moments. They are given some simple thing to do at a minute and a half after 10 a.m. and they must do it right at that time. They are graded on their promptness and accuracy in carrying out detail. The principal went on to say that the biggest difficulty with these smart boys is that they find it hard to do exactly what they are told. They all have ideas of their own.

We can see how this fits in the Christian life. The Lord Jesus said, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). He also said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John 5:19). These sentences bring out the idea that it was Jesus of Nazareth's peculiar, personal ambition to be totally obedient to His Father in heaven. Christ Jesus gave Himself in unqualified, unreserved loyalty and obedience. This is for us the essence of Christian service.

Many people have the idea that if a person is going to act like a Christian and serve like a Christian he must do certain things. However, it is not *what* I do, but *how* I do anything that is my service to the Lord. If I am going to do the service of the Lord, this will not primarily mean that I must go three doors down the street and talk to a neighbor about Christ; it is not that I must teach a Sunday school class; it is not that I must keep the house clean. The first thing I am to do is to yield myself as willing to obey the living Lord. The Lord is not going to ask me to climb the highest mountain, swim the widest river, or run the fastest mile. He will ask me to do something that I can do. Usually it will be a simple thing, and often it will be so humble that I will not want to do it. I might want to do something important. I would not want to just give in and give up all the time. But that may be exactly what the Lord Jesus would want me to do, because that was what He did when He was here. He yielded Himself; He didn't take anything for Himself; He emptied Himself.

The Christian's service will move toward *good works*. When the Bible says *good works*, it means works that are of good report, actions which people talk about as *good*. The Christian will have in mind that he will do whatever is good for others, because that will be honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul had no special zeal about how he would act at any time except that he would always act in

obedience to his heavenly Father. In this way he was willing to be "All things to all men" that he might always render the service expected of a Christian in any situation in which he happened to be. Whatever was required in that situation, he wanted to be found faithful to his obligation, honest in the sight of all men, and of good report – acting in a way that people would accept.

In my service as a Christian, I will show certain characteristics. I will always show respect to those who are over me. I will not be disobedient to those in authority. It is not befitting for me to break any law of the land, whatever that law may be. As a Christian I not only yield to those who are in authority and respect those who are over me, but I show the same regard for those who are on a level with me, or over whom I might have authority. The Christian will have consideration for all people in any service he performs.

If I were living in an apartment house and I happened to have my radio tuned in loud, I would immediately think of all the other people in the apartment house. Therefore, not wanting to disturb anyone, I would turn down the volume on the radio. If I owned some chickens and I moved into a community in which there was no definite law stating I could not have chickens but the people of the community did not want chickens around, as a Christian I would not insist on having chickens. I would do without them, or I would move out into the country. If I had a dog that barked late at night, I would get rid of him. A barking dog might disturb someone who is not feeling well and needs sleep. It is not that important for me to have a dog, but it is important that I consider the needs of other people who live near me.

Some people may wonder whether or not a Christian should be expected to act in that way. I would ask them what they think the local preacher ought to do in such a situation. That is a good way for people to decide what ought to be done. If they heard that the preacher lived at a certain place and that he had a dog that barked late at night, would they think he ought to keep that dog? We know very well they would say he should not. They might think their reason is that he should act that way because he is a preacher. They really mean because he is a Christian.

I can remember when our four children were all small, but yet old enough to enjoy games. On Sunday afternoons they would have their usual hilarious enjoyment of some game in the back yard. Our children were about 4, 5, 6, and 7 years of age and usually six or seven neighbor children the same age and size would come over to play with them. One Sunday we received a phone call from the neighbors, who requested that we quiet the children a bit. The neighbors were trying to sleep. We were embarrassed because we had not thought of the neighbors, but I am glad to say they never had to phone again. What our children were doing was certainly innocent enough. After all, it was just a group of children playing in their own yard. But we didn't own the whole town, and some of those children could make enough noise to reach over the whole town. Our children simply had to take up a more quiet Sunday afternoon activity.

Christian service means that I will honor those who are above me, I will consider those who are equal to me, and I will show charity to the poor. This type of behavior will adorn the Gospel and lay up treasure in heaven. It will be my "reasonable service."