

Christ our Example

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”
Matt. 11:28-30.

I wish especially to call attention to these words: “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” Everybody knows that Christ is our example in the Christian life. It would be useless for me to take your time or mine to set forth that fact. There are a great many who desire to imitate the example of Christ, a great many who do not know how, and the purpose of our study this afternoon will be, if possible, to help some one to know how to do this. I take it for granted that every Christian knows that he ought to be like Christ. There is no teaching of the Scripture more plain than this, and the promise is, that while the disciple is not above his teacher, yet every one who is perfected, will be as his teacher. Our purpose is to bring out some simple and plain lessons which, we hope, will be helpful to you in understanding better how to imitate the life of Christ.

Three Definite Points.

We might wander over a great deal of ground in this matter, and occupy our whole time, without getting anything very definite in our minds. But I want to get two or three lessons fixed; for they are the foundation of every other lesson, and with them all the other lessons come of themselves. To make the point definite in our minds with reference to learning of Him, I want to set before you three points.

We are to imitate the example of Christ in living in God and with God and for God. How shall we live, as did Christ in God, with God, and for God?

Christ the Branch.

Christ was the very revelation of God, the life of God in the earth. In Zech. 6:12 the prophet says of Him: "Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and He shall grow up out of His place [not in the wrong place, but where He is; He will grow up out of His place], and He shall build the temple of the Lord." Christ is here spoken of as the branch, and He was the branch of God. But His root was in heaven; and in being the branch of God to this world, He is, in another sense, the arm of God. God was in heaven, but He was reaching down in Jesus Christ to get hold of the world. As the branch, Christ grew as the branch, in order to be something visible to the world. God is in clouds and darkness; but He wanted to reveal Himself to a world that had been cut off by sin, so Christ came as a branch of Himself.

The Hidden Source of Life.

You know that the roots of a tree are hidden underneath; but they are the secret sources of life, and that which appears, which we call the tree, is after all but the root which comes up in sight. Christ was the branch to the world, but His root was hidden in God, and He was made manifest that the world might see what God is. Christ's life, when He was here in the flesh, was in God, and He depended on God just as much for life for His service here as we are obliged to depend upon God. To be sure, He had life; "for as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." But when He came here to be the revelation of God to the world, and an example to humanity, He put Himself in the very place of humanity; and as humanity was weak, He became weak for humanity's sake. As humanity was dependent wholly upon a power outside of itself, so He became dependent. And He said, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

He took that place of dependence, that position of weakness, in order that He might pass through the experience of those whom He came to save; His life was hid in God, and He depended

wholly upon God and upon the ministry of angels.

Christ's Life in God.

Do not think that the life of Christ here was a life of ease because He was the divine Son of God. He was the divine Son of God, but He veiled that divinity. Behold the wondrous condescension of God in Christ. Although He had power, yet He laid it down, and became dependent. This is stated in Scriptures. The Gospel of John is the great gospel of life. We turn to it when we want to learn about life. In this Gospel Christ says, "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

While it is true that Jesus Christ was divinity veiled in humanity, it is also true that He was humanity enshrined in divinity. In His humanity He hung Himself upon His Father for help, for strength, for all that He needed as humanity; in His divinity, the Father dwelt in Him, and worked through Him. He was divinity in humanity, the roots reaching to heaven, but He was humanity enshrined in divinity. So He says in John 14:10: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." And He asked for His disciples, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." John 17:21. Christ was that union of the divine and the human, which is the perfection of humanity, because of divinity working in and through humanity.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1:18. Notice the statement. It does not say, "who came from the bosom of the Father," but "which is in the bosom of the Father." There was such a union between Christ and His Father that where Christ was, there the Father was. And He was in the bosom of the Father while here upon earth, His life hid

in God for our sakes.

Now we will notice Christ's Life With God; that is to say, His communion with God, His fellowship with God. While His life was with God, it must also flow out through humanity, and Christ, by putting Himself in the position of humanity, puts Himself in the place of the empty vine, that must be filled from the Father. He puts Himself in that position where, by His communion with God, He received from God what He gave to the world. In His last prayer He said, "For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me;" "and the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." John 17:8, 22.

He stood between God and man, to receive from God on His divine side, to hand out on His human side, and to make a complete connection between the divine and the human. But in putting Himself there, He subjected Himself to the same conditions that we find in us. He had nothing in Himself, He emptied Himself, and became a channel of blessing and light and power and life and glory to man. What He brought to the world, He brought because the Father gave it to Him, and He must needs go to the Father to get what the Father would have Him give to the world, because of His dependence.

Christ's Source of Strength

So we find Christ going often to the Father for communion, seeking from Him strength. Let us read two or three scriptures that will emphasise this. "In the morning rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Mark 1:35 Why?—Because He had a day before Him of revealing the Father, a day before Him of giving God to the people, and He must needs rise a great while before day, and go to the Father, and in fellowship with Him, in communion with Him, He must receive from Him what He was to give to the people." Now when all the people were baptised, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which

said, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Luke 3:21, 22. The heavens were opened to Christ when He prayed; the heavens will be opened to us when we pray.

"And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and Went Up Into a Mountain to Pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering." Luke 9:28, 29. But let me tell you He prayed more than a short prayer that night. Christ prayed His short prayers in public; but when He went to commune with God in the night season, then it was that He poured out His soul before God, reaching out in His weakness, and clinging to God, not simply for Himself, but for all the people, for our sakes, that He might grasp divine power; and it was while He was praying that the fashion of His countenance was altered.

It was when Moses was in the presence of God that his face shone with glory, so that when he came out the people could not stand before him. It was when Christ, as our representative, prayed that night on the mountain till His disciples fell asleep and the dews of night fell on Him, that the heavens were opened to Him. It is in our communion with God that glory rests upon us, and our filthy garments are changed to the white robes of Christ's righteousness.

Christ's Life for God

And so it was in answer to His communion with the Father that He received from God the blessings He gave to humanity; but now, having a life in God, maintained by fellowship with God, that life of power is to be spent for God. Christ's life was a life of sacrifice, a life of service for God; He was a representative of God as well as the representative of humanity. He was sent here to represent the divine character, but also to show that it is possible for that divine character to be revealed in humanity

Do not think that God is some far-away being. The life and experience of Christ were to show to the world that God can

dwell in humanity; that God has made humanity as a temple for His own indwelling, and Christ received the very presence of the Father to dwell in His humanity, to show that humanity can be a temple for the living God.

Christ spent His life wholly in service for God. All the strength received from the Father in His hours of prayer went out in ministry. He fed the people, taught them, laboured for them, and He became weary as He walked up and down Judea, giving His life for the people. And He ended it by giving His life on the cross for them. That is the life of Christ, in God, with God, and for God.

Christ's Life to Be Repeated in Us.

I delight to dwell upon that picture, and to have it presented before our minds; but I want to tell you that the only reason that picture is recorded on the page of history is because it is God's intention that the same experience shall be lived over again in us. It is God's purpose that we shall be like Christ, and He has made provision that we shall be. I know we are weak, I know we are helpless, I know we are unworthy; but I know that God has made wondrous provision. God knew that we were unworthy; but He made the provision that through just such humanity as there is here to-day, if they will have faith in Christ, He will reveal His character, and make them channels of blessing to the world. That is God's design for us, and let us rejoice in the thought; let us take our eyes off the cheap, common things, and low grades of Christian experience, and look up to the throne of God and of Christ, our Advocate, who is there to intercede for us. Let us believe that God intends a wonderful experience for us in His Son. His plan is to do it, and His grace is sufficient.

Our lives, just like Christ's are to be in God, with God, for God. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." That experience is for us, and we are to realise every day that we have no life in ourselves; that we have no power in ourselves; but that all our life and power must come from

Christ. Our life, like Christ's, must be between the mountain and the multitude, going up into the mountain with God get what He has for us, that we may bring it down to give to the people.

When Christ fed the thousands by His miracles, He Himself did not give the bread to the people; but He blessed it and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and they gave it to the people. We are to go to Him, and He will bless the loaf, and give it to us; and then, as a loaf blessed of Him, and having in it life and salvation, we are to bring it to the people. And so we must continue Our Life of Fellowship With God.

And this life of fellowship must be, in every detail, like Christ's. We must be born in the Spirit as was He born in the Spirit; we must be baptised of the Holy Spirit as was He. When we go to temptation, we must go as He did,— led of the Spirit; when we return from victory over temptation, we must return as He did, in the power of the Spirit. When we preach we must say as He did—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Luke 4:18. He was baptised of the Holy Spirit, and "went about doing good." He would even go out of His way to give somebody the opportunity of receiving benefit from Him. His was a life of service and self-sacrifice, and He calls upon us to follow His example, not in our own strength, but with a life in God, rooted in heaven. He bids us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Learning By Service.

Our life, being a life with God in the power of the Spirit, must also be a life for God. We are kept many times from the fulness of this experience by being afraid of God. We are afraid that if we unreservedly and fully give ourselves up to God and say, "Whether I live or die, whether in sickness or

health, all my life shall be for God," that God will call us to something that we do not want; and it is that very fear that keeps God from revealing Himself to us and in us. God does not reveal Himself by telling about Himself; but He says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." By service learn.

We do not enter the school of Christ to have Him tell us the theory of the Christian life simply as something to be studied out ourselves. God gives us knowledge of Himself by revealing Himself in us, and when He wants us to know the experience of faith and the victory of faith, He leads us up to a Red Sea, that He may teach us what this victory means. It is by living with God that we learn God. Our heads may be filled with a great many theories; but they will all be useless unless we know what God is by seeing what He does for us, by seeing what He can do for those that believe in Him, by being in Him, and letting Him work.

We have a great many lessons to learn about God, and the fundamental lesson is, "Walk in the light." Everything depends upon light. Take it away and the flowers will die. They must live in the light. Take away the light of God from us, and our Christian experience perishes, but the light goes on. It is not stationary; it moves, and we must move with it in order to keep the light we have, and open the channel for more light.

Let us notice now our life for God.

Denying Self.

In Matt. 16:24 we read, "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." "Let him deny himself." Those words have a much broader meaning than staying away from some place of amusement, or giving up eating something that pleases the palate. They mean the sacrifice of self, the disinheriting of self, the emptying out of self, the very denial of self. Peter denied Christ when he said, "I know Him not," and we are to treat self in exactly the same way. Does self rise up and claim recognition? then say, "I know you not." Just as

distinctly as Peter three times denied his Lord, so we, when self rises up and wants to control us, are to say, "I do not know you; I will have nothing to do with you." Deny self, disinherit self, let self die, and keep it dead, too.

Said Paul, "I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." I Cor. 15:31. Many people are troubled in their Christian experience because self is continually rising. "Why," they say, "I thought yesterday that I had gained a complete victory, and that self was crucified." Self was crucified just as long as the faith that cast self out kept it out, but just the moment that that faith wavers, self rises up and asserts its power. The faith which puts self to death must keep it dead. Self must be crucified daily and hourly through faith in Jesus Christ.

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." I would like to impress upon your minds to-day what is included in the cross of Christ. Let us spell it.

C.—Crucifixion.—The very first letter and the very first lesson of the cross. Said Paul in his letter to the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20. He said again in this same letter, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14. Taking up the cross means the death of self; bearing the cross means dying daily, selfdeath, keeping self dead. That is crucifixion, the very first letter of the cross, but I want to tell you that there is another letter.

R.—Resurrection.—After crucifixion there is a rising again. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Rom. 6:5. I like the Revised Version of this verse, which reads, "For if we have been united with the likeness of His crucifixion, we shall be also with the likeness of His

resurrection.” (margin.) If you spell C, you can spell R. For “like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Christ lived this life on the earth for our sakes; He was crucified for our offences, but He was raised again for our justification. We do not need to mourn; for He who made heaven and earth is our Saviour, and He lives today for us. He said when He was here, “All power upon heaven and earth is given unto Me.” He gained this power by His death, and when He was raised up, He was raised up to newness of life. “In that He died, He died unto sin once, but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” And the new life to which we are raised is not the old life of self, but it is the life of Jesus Christ,—that divine-human life, which is not simply the life of God apart from flesh, nor the life of flesh apart from God, but the life of God which has been wrought into human flesh. That life comes to us in our resurrection from the crucifixion of self. Where self dies Christ lives; where the old man is buried, the new man is raised to life; where the old man lived in sin, the new man walks with God. It is the resurrection life in the power of Christ’s resurrection.

Said Paul in his letter to the Philippians, I count everything that I ever thought was worth anything, as loss, “for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.” As less than nothing I hold the experiences of the past, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection.” It is the resurrection power that we Christians need; it is the resurrection life that we must have; and I thank God that it is the resurrection life that is provided. Do not be satisfied with anything short of that. It is God’s free gift in Jesus Christ. I would that I could arouse everyone that has the least spark of faith in Jesus Christ, to lay hold largely upon His power. There is no danger of our exhausting the supply; infinite are His resources; infinite His love; infinite His desire for us. He is only waiting for us to grasp it by faith.

I thank God that it is so.

O.—Obedience.—That goes with the cross. To everyone who thinks that he cannot obey God's law, I would say, Obey the gospel. If you are afraid of the law, obey the gospel, that is enough. What happens to those who do not obey the gospel?—"And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 1:7-9. Friends, obey the gospel, and I will risk the law. Obey the gospel, because we have found in the plainest possible manner that the gospel is simply the law in Christ.

Read 2 Cor. 10:5, and it will show us to what extent this obedience is to go. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." He who does not obey the gospel in thought, does not obey the gospel at all. He who does not obey the truth in thought, does not obey the truth at all. No outward life can satisfy; it must be the inmost life of the soul; and the outward life, after all, will be but the revealing of what is within. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And the glory of every pure thought and holy deed we are to give to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Obedience stands right in the centre of the cross.

S.—Sacrifice.—That sacrifice which offers up self,—self-sacrifice: the complete yielding of everything to God, the entire consecration which lays everything upon God's altar, and cares not for the opinion of men, but looks to God for His opinion; which cares not for the words of men, but looks to God in Jesus Christ for His word; which lives the life He lived in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

S.—Service.—A life given up to God, devoted wholly to God. Christ's mission here was to save the lost, and it is the mission of every representative of His to do the same work. Let me tell you, my friends, in the fear of God, that we will

not stand clear in His sight if we have not laboured for Him. Selfishness has no place in heaven. And unless we get rid of self, we can never go to heaven. Jesus Christ is the only One who can take us there; self will drag us down to hell. Let Jesus Christ lift us up. Let us consecrate our lives and all we have to the service of God. It is all His anyway. How much I ask you, is it to give to God what belongs to Him already? Anything short of this sacrifice is robbing God. We are His by creation and by redemption. In the mouth of two witnesses shall it be established that we are His. Then act as though we were His, and let Him act as though we were His.

The very purpose of the life of Christ in heaven now is that the image of God may appear in our lives. Christ lived His life here in the flesh to show us what the image of God is; but He is not satisfied with that. He wants us to cooperate with Him in letting that life be lived again in us. Christ told His disciples just before ascending that He would send His Holy Spirit to dwell in them. God's purpose, and I would that this thought might be burned in our minds, is that the very life that Christ lived shall be lived by His followers. And we live that life by our submission and willingness to give up our own way and let God be glorified in Jesus Christ. That is Christian life. I would that I could impress upon every Christian what it is his privilege to be. If you have not known it, take hold of Jesus Christ. God is able to do great things for us. He has promised to do great things for us, and His promises never fail; they are to-day yea and amen in Jesus Christ. What God wants us to do is to have faith in them, and treat Him as our loving Father, who has given us all things in Jesus Christ.

Now we have the cross,—Crucifixion, resurrection, obedience, sacrifice, service. It begins with the death of self; it rises into a new life, even the life of Christ; it shows itself in implicit obedience to God in Jesus Christ; it gives itself a sacrifice to others; for says the Scripture, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John 3:16.

“The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.” Matt. 10:25. He who holds on to self will perish with self; he who lets go of self will live in Jesus Christ, and will find a life that measures with the life of God.

Giving Up Self Only a Question of Time.

It is only a question with us of when we are going to give up this life. You are, I know, very well aware that the days of our life are but “threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” Ps. 90:10. Shall we give up this life now and receive the life of Christ, or shall we hold to this life until it is taken away from us, and it is too late to receive the life of Christ? We are to meet God face to face. Shall we meet Him in Christ or in self? We are to meet the law of God. Shall we meet that law in Jesus Christ or in ourselves? These experiences must come to everyone. The question for us to settle is, Shall they come to us in Christ or out of Christ? Our safety, our glory, our joy, is in meeting these experiences in Jesus Christ.

Degrees in the School of Christ. I want now to call your attention to the experience of the apostle Paul as a disciple, in the school of Christ. Before his conversion Paul was a disciple in the school of Gamaliel. I do not know what the customs of the Jewish schools were in that time, or whether they conferred any degrees on Paul, but I know that he was a learned man, and I suppose he had gathered up the wisdom of the day as it could be learned in the Jewish schools. Speaking of himself in his letter to the Philippians, he says, “For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other

man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." And he speaks of this again to the Galatians: "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many mine equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." Phil. 3:3-6; Gal. 1:13, 14. That is where Paul stood when he entered the school of Christ. I want to follow his experience in the school of Christ, and see the degrees that he took.

The first degree is— **B. A.—Born again**. That is the first degree everyone takes in the school of Christ. Writing to the Corinthians Paul says, "And last of all He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time." 1 Cor. 15:8. Christ said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." John 3:7. But right in connection with that "must" is another. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. "Ye must be born again," "the Son of man must be lifted up", and in Him is the life for the new birth. The first degree then is Born again.

The next degree that Paul took was— **M. A.—Moulded afresh**. Made over completely by the new life. Paul writes of this in Col. 3:9, 10, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created Him." The first degree, Born again, is conferred upon us in order that the new life dwelling in us may mould and fashion us after the image of God.

The next degree is— **D. D.—Delivered Debtor**. After one has received the new birth, moulding him into the new life, to what then is he debtor? Said Paul, "I am a debtor both to the

Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am really to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." Rom. 1:14, 15. He had been delivered, and he felt himself a debtor to give to others what he had received. He took this degree and deserved it. His life was a manifestation that he was indeed a D. D. in Christ, a delivered debtor, who gave his life to give to others what God had given him.

I think Paul took the next degree also, that of— **LL. D.—Life Lovingly Dedicated**. These are the genuine degrees in God's school, Born Again, Moulded Afresh, Delivered Debtor, a Life Lovingly Dedicated. What is this but life in God, life with God, and life for God? That was Paul's experience, and God has set forth that experience for us, because it belongs to every child of God.

We might continue this lesson at great length, but I want these thoughts to abide in your minds. They are a great deal better to talk about and to think about than the cheap, common things of life. Let our minds be filled with the things of God, with the word of God, and then expect God to tell us great things about His word, and to reveal to us the deep things of God. And let us look for these degrees in our lives. No university founded by man can confer these degrees upon anyone, but in the school of Christ they are open to everyone. If anyone wants to carry about with him degrees that are worth something, let him enter the school of Christ, and take the degrees given there.

If you will carry away with you these thoughts to-day, that God in Jesus Christ lived a life of perfection on earth, and that Jesus Christ now lives in heaven, our great high Priest, making intercession for us, receiving from the Father the promise of His Spirit that He may give it to us, in order that the very same character that appeared in the character of Jesus Christ to the glory of God may appear in you, and if you will believe in God to work that in you by crucifixion, by

obedience, by self-sacrifice, by service, God will greatly bless your lives in Jesus Christ.

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