

Christian Communion

by John G Lake

I want to read a series of portions of Scriptures this morning, with this one general thought in view, the presence of Christ. Some of you may have read a little booklet by an old monk, whose name was Father Lawrence. It is called "Practicing the Presence of Christ."

One of the things the Christian world does not get hold of with a strong grip, is the conscious presence of Christ, with us now. Somehow there is an inclination in the Christian spirit to feel that Jesus, when He left the earth, returned to Glory, and inconsequence is not present with us now.

I want to show you how wonderfully the Scriptures emphasize the fact of His presence with us now. When He was talking to the eleven, just prior to His ascension, (Matthew 28), after delivering to them the great commission He said:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

He ended this statement with these words:

"And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

It would seem naturally as if a separation had been contemplated because of His return to Glory, but no such separation is contemplated on the part of Christ. Christ promised His omnipotent presence with us always, Christ's omnipresence, everywhere. Present in the soul, present in the world, present always unto the end of the age.

As Paul was going down the road to Damascus, when the presence of God's glory shown around him, he fell prostrate on the earth, and heard a voice speaking to him. When he demanded to know who it was, the voice replied, "I am Jesus." Jesus was present with him as a Savior to deliver him from his difficulties and his sins.

At a later time in Paul's career, he returned to Jerusalem, and was in danger of his life. While he prayed in the temple, he was overshadowed by the Spirit, and says, "I was in a trance, and saw Him saying unto me, make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; or they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." Paul endeavors to argue with the Lord about it. That conversation has always been a blessing to my soul. It is so real. I have always been so glad that Paul answered back to the Lord, and the details of the conversation have been recorded.

Paul said, "But Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat, in every synagogue, them that

believed on Thee. And when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." But the Lord replied, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Jesus is just as close to the Christian soul as He was to Paul. There is a beautiful verse that expresses that so sweetly, "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

Christ is the living presence, not only with us, but to the real Christian, He is in us, a perpetual joy, power and Glory in our life. When a soul reaches to the heights of God it will only be because of the guiding and counseling and indwelling and infilling of the Christ.

TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION

Blessed Jesus, Lord and God, He who dwells within,
Blessed Jesus, He who came to free our hearts from sin,
Give us now Thy presence in us
Sweetly verified by Thy Holy Word,
Give us now Thy presence,
That we too, may call Thee Lord,
Precious Jesus, Lord of Heaven,
Blessed Jesus, come and dwell,
Blessed Christ of all the Heaven, Dearer to our heart;
Christ of God come in and dwell,
That within us we may be,
Perfectly conscious of that indwelling,
And ever from sin set free.

Many of us no doubt have been struck with the beautiful war story that has been going the rounds of the magazine for some months called, "The Comrade". It has the sense of comradeship that makes the Lord Jesus not only a Savior in the ordinary sense, but a Savior and Companion in all our ways and walks of life, filling the place in our soul that only a comrade can fill.

One of my exploring expeditions while in Africa, I met a man, in Portuguese East Africa, who told me he had lived for eleven years with only natives as his associates. One evening, as we came along, passing through the veldt, I observed this little cabin, which indicated the presence of a European. So I started over, expecting to discover a man with some white blood in him at least. But I was overjoyed to find he was an intelligent English gentleman.

He had come to Africa in the early days with his wife and children. His sons had been killed in a native uprising. His wife had died of fever and only he was left. I said, "Why didn't you return to England?"

He replied, "I didn't have any desire to return. Many of my friends I used to know had died, or gone to Australia, or with a new set of people. I concluded I would just settle down and spend the rest of my days here."

We sat all night and talked about the ordinary things that were going in the world about us. It was the first time he had any outside news in several years. We sat fellow shipping during the night.

Before I went away the next morning, I asked him what it was he missed more than anything else since he had been out there. He replied, "Mr. Lake, I guess one word will cover it. Comradeship." The lack of that real soul comradeship which makes life so dear to every man.

That is the place that Jesus purposed to occupy in the Christian life. That piece of real comradeship, whereby through His grace and love He supplies to us that thing that we need so much to make this life the joyous, victorious life He purposed it to be. His presence with us, His guiding counsel, His transforming grace, His soul absorbing presence, which in the ultimate commands all the intensity of our nature, is for us.

Paul expresses it so wonderfully in the words, "Christ is all and in all." Paul gives us a still different vision of the presence and power of Christ with us in the fourth of Ephesians. This time it is a transformer.

"Until we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

This shows the ultimate purpose of Christ as Savior, of Christ as a companion, of Christ as the indweller. Christ's presence with us is not just as an outward companion, but an indwelling, divine force, revolutionizing our nature and making us like Him. Indeed, the final and ultimate purpose of the Christ is that the Christian shall be reproduced in His own likeness, within and without.

Paul again expresses the same thing in the first of Colossians, the 22nd verse, where he says:

"To present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight."

That transformation is to be an inner transformation. It is a transformation of our life, of our nature into His nature, into His likeness.

Now the mechanical fades away, in view of the living fact that, Christ purposes to accomplish in us, through the Spirit. How wonderful the patience, and marvelous the power that takes possession of the soul of man and accomplishes the will of God in His absolute transformation into real beautiful holiness of the character of Jesus.

Our heart staggers when we think of such a calling, when we think of such a nature, when we contemplate such a character. That is God's purpose for you and me.

In emphasizing this truth, the apostle again puts it into a different form, He says, "Until Christ be for me in you."

Or until by the transforming operation of the Spirit of God we are remade, or transformed. Until our nature is transformed by the operation of the Spirit of God in our soul, then we are remade or transformed. Until our nature is transformed into the nature of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

His was the perfect character. Consequently every other character that can be joined with Him in real heirship must be like God's Son. Jesus never can present that which is faulty or evil or weak to the Father. The transforming grace of God must take away and does take away, sin, from the soul of man. It gives him His strength instead of human weakness. It supplies the grace that makes him like the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the marvel He has undertaken to accomplish, to transform the soul of man in the likeness and character of Himself, and then present mankind to the Father, "Holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight."

When Jesus stood before the disciples, just prior to His going out into the Garden. He delivered to them that wonderful address of the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John. He climaxed it with that marvelous high priestly prayer of the 17th chapter. He endeavored to bring them to understand His nature and power. Knowing that all power had been given unto Him, He took a towel and a basin and proceeded to wash the disciples' feet.

When He had finished He said, "Know ye not what I have done unto you?" In explanation He said, "If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

In assuming the attitude of a servant, He had taught mankind what their relationship as brother should be.

When we examine the human heart and endeavor to discover what it is that retards our progress, I believe we find that pride in the human soul perhaps is the greatest difficulty we have to overcome. Jesus taught us a wonderful humility, taking the place of a slave. So we are enjoined, to thus treat and love one another.

His presence with us, His presence in us, must produce in our hearts the same conditions that were in His own. It must bring, into our life, the same humility that was in Him. It is one of the secrets of entrance into the grace of God.

TONGUES & INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

"When the precious Christ enters into the unregenerated heart, He becomes the very center of their being. He becomes the very acme of their ambition. That they might be like Him. He, through true humility of His soul, left the things of His glorious Father's kingdom to come into this world of woe and sin; by which He was enabled to live the life of perfection in this earth and become the real Redeemer and Sympathizer of mankind."

In the story of the Comrade the substance of it is, practically that, the Comrade is ever present. In the course of the conversation with the Comrade, it is observed that there are wounds in His hands, and He replies, "Yes, they are old wounds, but they have been giving me a good deal of trouble of late."

That is the vital sense of real Comradeship that makes the spirit of Jesus one with us, so that we realize and He realizes when the conditions of our nature and mind affect Him.

For two days I have been under a tremendous burden, one of these spirit burdens that come at times, when you cannot define them. I could not tell whence it came. But every little while I felt I wanted to sit down and cry. Presently during the day a friend came and unloaded the burden of her soul to me, and then I realized that I had been under the burden for that soul for two days. I had not known the trouble existed.

That is the character of Comradeship, which is between the real Christian and the Christ. The Christian feels the burdens of the Christ and the Christ feels the burdens of the Christian and being united as one spirit, the interest of the Christ are the interests of the Christian, and the interests of the Christian are the interests of the Christ. That relationship is the truest, deepest order. It is the relationship of spirit with spirit.

When a young man, before I had entered into this life, indeed from your boyhood, there were times when my spirit would become overshadowed with the burden of another life, sometimes with the sorrows of another. I had one of these experiences when perhaps not more than ten or eleven years of age. On a particular Sunday, I arose with one of these burdens on my spirit, and I walked out into the fields. There was a high hill on my father's farm. The sun had not yet gotten over this hill. When I got to the top I looked down over the beautiful field. There was a lake, and I was thinking how beautiful it was and all the surroundings. In the midst of it, tears commenced to run and I sat down on a stone and cried. After a while I got up and wondered why I was crying. Several days later we received a letter telling that dear old Grandfather had died. And then the old Grandmother had said, "Well, I do not want to live any more", and she died also. Around them were a group of sorrowing friends, and somehow my spirit contacted that spirit.

One of the truest things in all my life, in my relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, has been to feel that He was capable of knowing my sorrows and yours. And that in the truest sense He

thereby became our Comrade.

In Isaiah there is a verse that wonderfully expresses that fact. "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them." (Isaiah. 63:9) "In His life and in His pity He redeemed them, and bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

There is a union between the Christ and the Christian that is so deep, so pure, so sweet, so real, that the very conditions of the human spirit are transmitted to His, and the conditions of the Christ's Spirit are transmitted to ours. It is because of the continuous inflow of the Spirit of Christ in our heart that we appreciate or realize His power and triumph. It lifts man above his surroundings and causes him to triumph anywhere and everywhere.

The Christian life is designed by God to be a life of splendid, holy triumph. That triumph is produced in us through the continuous inflow and abiding presence of the Spirit of the triumphant Christ. He brings into our nature the triumph that He enjoys. Indeed the mature Christian, having entered into that consciousness of overcoming through the Spirit of Christ, is privileged to transmit that same overcoming power and spirit to other lives, in and through the power of the Spirit of God.

That is why the Christian who is joined with the Christ, lives, moves and has his being, in the same life, in the same Spirit, that the Christ is and has, and is therefore the reproduction of the Lord Jesus Christ.