

Christ All and in All

Reading: Col. 2:8-15, 20-23; Gal. 3:27-28; Col. 3:1-11; 1 Cor. 2:2.

It is on our heart to say something about what God is doing in this age — and by “this age” we mean that range of time between the cross of the Lord Jesus, His ascension to heaven, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and that final coming of Christ for His church. How long that time will be no one knows. As to the day of His appearing, it has not been revealed. Many things have been disclosed which are called “signs of the times”. From those things we are able to judge of the progress of the age, and of its approaching end. It is not our intention to say very much about the coming again of Christ, but rather to be occupied with what God is doing in this age.

These passages, in principle at least, embody that age-work of God in this world. God is quite definitely given up to a purpose, and is occupied throughout this age with that purpose. It is a purpose which is not clear to, or understood by, the majority, but it is in the word of God, to be revealed by the Holy Spirit to all those who come into a living relationship with Christ, who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who are being led by Him, and are listening to His voice as He speaks in the word of God.

Before we state quite definitely what that purpose is, let us note this general thing, that God is undoing by doing; and there is a very great deal for God to undo. The whole history of the world and of the race up to the death of the Lord Jesus is a history, from the day when Adam sinned in disobedience, which has got to be undone; a history of things having gone wrong, developed, carried on, perpetuated. God is undoing all that by doing. We will explain that in a moment.

Think of some of the things which went wrong and which are the result of man having gone wrong, man having refused to have God as his absolute Lord and Master. Man himself has gone wrong, and is by no means what God intended him to be. He is by no means what God made him. The race has also come into the realm of things altogether different from what God intended, not only in the matter of nature but as out of its nature there have come things which are far removed from God’s thought and intention and will that they are unthinkable in the realm of God.

We might go on covering the whole ground, the almost countless phases and aspects of the development of the history of this world in a wrong way, along the lines of its having gone wrong creating a tremendous situation; a situation which is coming fast to its full development, and which at the present point of its advancement is creating (or has already created) a problem for which no man is adequate. Who is there to solve the problem of the world situation today? Government follows government in quick succession in many lands, because its predecessors are totally incapable of mastering the situation, of being equal to the state of things; and this rapid pageant of governments in the world, the fall of kings, the rise of dictators, the calling of assemblies, world councils, national federations, international congresses; yet all breaking down, the situation too big, no one of any company sufficient to meet it. It is the ripening of the wrong history of this world.

That is the position to be undone. All that has got to be undone, and God is working at undoing it. Although it may seem to you like little more than a beautiful idea, a pretty story, nevertheless He is doing it! It is not apparent to the world; it is not apparent to a great multitude even of Christian people. It is going on nevertheless! God is undoing by doing.

What is God doing? He is making a new man in secret; not new men, but a new man. God made a Living Pattern for His new man, and that Living Pattern is at His own right hand

— the Lord Jesus, the perfect Man, the Man after His own heart; the Man in whom really, truly, gloriously He has already undone that history. Remember that the Lord Jesus represents the great fact that God has undone the history of this world as it went wrong. He has One who is utterly right according to His own mind, in whom there is no wrong. He has One in whom all the resultant division, schism, discord, conflict found in the Adam race has been brought to an end, and that Man at His own right hand is a Man in whom there is found no schism, no division, no strain, but a perfect harmony and oneness. The whole history has been undone in Christ.

In Christ there is one universal language, understood by every man and every woman in any part of this universe who is livingly joined to Him. In Christ God has wound up the whole of that history fully and finally. Now He is making His new man according to that Pattern. Neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman! No, none! One new man! Where Christ is All and in all! All those things speak of the old creation, the old wrong order. In Christ it has all gone. Now He is making His one new man again, according to that Pattern. The individual is not that new man. The individual is only new by relationship to the whole. The individual believer is only a part of that new man. The word here has two sides:

1. The Negative Side

There (in that new man) cannot be Jew, Greek, circumcision, uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, male, female (we are putting both portions together now and summing them all up). *There*, in that new man, they *cannot be*. There is the great “cannot” of the cross of the Lord Jesus set against those things. The cross says to the whole of that history of human division, human schism, human difference of every kind: You *cannot be*! When things according to God’s mind are in view, when God’s intention and purpose is presented, then to all that the cross says: You cannot be.

Why did the apostle use all these differentiating terms and titles? Simply because of the way in which men in the flesh were using them. “*There* cannot be Jew nor Greek ...”. Well, the Jew said: We are the privileged people; we are the people with the oracles and the covenants; we are the chosen people; we are the people with the genius for religion! You Gentiles are outside of the covenant; you are outside of the oracles; you are not the chosen people! To the Jew who speaks in that realm, who takes hold of his natural position and uses it like that in the flesh, Calvary says: You cannot be! You have no greater standing, no more privileged place, no fuller acceptance in God’s full thought than anyone else, and as such (as Jews, with all that that means) you cannot be! They were discriminating between themselves and the Gentiles on the ground of privilege, and the Lord says: That difference does not exist in what I am doing, so it is useless your trying to bring that in here!

The Greek would look at the barbarian. The barbarian does not mean in the New Testament what we mean by the barbarian. The Scythian means what we mean by the barbarian, but to the Greeks in the New Testament the barbarian simply meant the foreigner. When they spoke of a foreigner they spoke of him as the barbarian; that is; He is a foreigner; he is not of our race, not of our blood. And so, because he was a foreigner and not of pure Greek blood, he was at a disadvantage, and the Greek, therefore, stood in a higher position. Calvary says: Not so! As a privileged Greek, as holding — according to this world’s mind and standards — a higher position, a more privileged and advantaged position than the barbarian, the Greek cannot be! Calvary says, No!

Perhaps the barbarian looked down on the Scythian, just as the Jew and the Greek would look upon the Scythian; because the Scythian is not only a barbarian; he is a savage. The Scythian was one lower than the foreigner, and so they all looked down upon the

Scythian, and all regarded themselves as being better than the Scythian. Anything better than a savage! And again the Word comes in *here*: in the new man, even the barbarian, the foreigner, has no advantage over the savage. *There* cannot be barbarian and Scythian.

The freeman boasts of his freedom, and looks down upon the slave. The slave is at a disadvantage in the eyes of a freeman, someone to be despised. And once more the message is: in this new man that cannot be! It is something which belongs to this world system, and it is a system which is all wrong.

"Male nor female"! Why is that introduced? Simply because in Colosse and in Galatia the women were despised, and the men thought that they were better than the women. And so the word is very clear here: That cannot be! That is simply of nature gone wrong. There is a difference altogether when you are dealing with the Corinthians. Similar things are said to the Corinthians, but from an altogether different angle. In Colosse and in Galatia as a whole the women were despised. In Corinth a new liberty for women was coming about at the time of the apostle's letter, and the women were beginning to take hold of their new liberties and turn them into licenses, and using them even in the assembly, so that the need in the Corinthian letter is that the women must be subject. That is a different point. But here it is the other way round. All these things of human discrimination, differentiation; all this setting off of one against the other, is of the old "gone wrong" creation. In the new man *it cannot be!*

2. The Positive Side

How are you going to get over it? How is all that going to be effectively dealt with? How is that history which persists, and even sometimes asserts itself amongst the Lord's people going to be effectively wound up? By the positive side. God is undoing by doing! There cannot be but one new man!

What is God doing? There is His Pattern, a Living Pattern; and He is taking that One, and by His Spirit, is (so to speak) introducing what that One is into the many, into all believers, so that they are coming into the oneness of Christ; they are becoming partakers of Christ; Christ is being ministered to them. If you see the effect of that you will instantly recognise that this is the position to which we are brought, that it is not what you and I are by nature that now counts or matters. It is not now whether you are of this nationality or that; whether you are of this sex or of that; whether you are of this social position or of that; whether in this world you have these privileges or no privileges at all. Everything that matters now, and the only thing that matters, is: How much of Christ is there? And if a woman has more of Christ than a man, that is the thing that counts. If a barbarian or a Scythian has more of Christ than a Greek or a Jew, that is the thing that counts. It is the only thing that stands in God's sight.

God is making a new man. He has gathered all these up, and He has put them all into the caldron of Calvary, and melted them all down. All their differences have gone in the cross of the Lord Jesus, and now He is taking them up and making a new corporate man. That is going on inside of us. It is not whether I have certain things with which I am born, certain privileges which have come to me in this world, or whether I have none. It is that I have Christ. It is not what I am by nature, but what I am by grace. It is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*". All that God is looking at is the measure of Christ in us. If you can minister Christ, that is the thing that counts. I am quite sure that if Christ is predominant you will not get out of your place and be self-assertive. All that we have to look after is that it is Christ in evidence, and not ourselves by nature. God is making silently, secretly, this new man.

In all who have believed God has introduced Christ. "*I and My Father will come unto him and will make our abode with him*". That is made true and actual by the Holy Spirit

coming into us at our new birth. By our yielding, our obedience, by our acceptance of the fact that the cross of the Lord Jesus stands fully and finally over the old creation, the old Adam; by our accepting that in its outworking, Christ is being formed in us, growing in us, increasing in us. So that it is more of Christ, an increase of Christ. The Word says: "*Where Christ is all and in all*".

God has made that the final thing. God does not make any provision for our flesh at all. God does not see a place for us in our own nature. God says Christ is All (you cannot have more than all) and in all. It is finality from His standpoint, and it is only as you and I day by day by the help of the Holy Spirit recognise the All in all-ness of Christ that God can go on with His work of doing the positive thing, which represents the undoing of that old thing. He is undoing a history by making a new man.

Look at it! There is the old fallen nature, with all its wrong-ness, and its constant going wrong. How true the words of the prophet: "*All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way ...*". Ah, yes! but now through faith in the Lord Jesus another nature has been introduced at the very centre of our being, deeper down than our own nature, stronger and mightier. It will progressively make manifest that it is mightier, because it is in the hand of the Almighty, nurtured, cherished, watched over by the Spirit of God. We shall progressively discover that, although our old nature may be active, there is something which smites it, which registers its supremacy upon it, which demands its subjection, and which throws our whole being into an awful tumult until we have yielded the supremacy to the Spirit of the Lord as He works to reproduce this nature of Christ in us. Let us rest more upon such comforting words as this: "*He which began a good work in you will perfect it ...*"; "*He will perfect that which concerneth us*". He has started something in us, and He can carry it through. It is not in our hands, it is in His. All He asks for is a right of way, a consent and a yielding on our part, an attitude maintained according to what we sing:

"Mould me and make me
After Thy will,
While I am waiting
Yielded and still."

That is all! It begins inwardly.

Then this undoing by doing begins to manifest itself outwardly. Oh! that there would be more of it! Oh! that the Lord's people would not set up artificial and legal barriers to it, but allow it, for this thing only wants allowing. Christ only wants allowing. He will get rid of our nationalities quite well. He will deal with our variety of temperaments quite well. He will deal with all the difficulties of the social position, human differences of every kind. We shall find ourselves speaking the one thing. Babel will be thoroughly undone by a new language. There is a language which we as God's children have in common. The world does not understand our language. It is altogether a foreign language. It does not exist on the earth for them. There is a speech which is not through our human lips, but which is the speech of an inward communion, heart to heart, spirit to spirit; not two different Christs speaking, but one Christ by one Spirit. What is the unity of the Spirit? What is the communion of the Spirit? It is the one principle of Christ in us all making us one, because there are not two Spirits, not two Christs; there are not as many Holy Spirits or Christs as there are believers, There is only one, and He is in you all. And so we find that Babel is undone, because there is a language of the heart, a language of the Spirit between all born anew ones.

What is the solution to the whole problem of differences, discords and divisions, even in the Lord's family? The solution to the problem is found in one direction only, but it is found in that direction *it is* more of Christ, that is all! What you and I need in order to get over our difficulties with other people is simply more of Christ. We cannot meet a difficulty in

this universe which Christ cannot overcome, and as Christ is ministered to us we shall find it possible to get over that difficulty. It is all Christ! The whole battle has been fought by Him in His cross.

All these conditions are the result of the workings of evil spirits. The principalities and powers, and the world-rulers of this darkness are setting the nations against one another, and the race against itself. But then God, as it were, put a hedge around a certain part of this universe, and within that hedge is the company of His own born anew ones, and within that hedge Christ has triumphed over principalities and powers and all dividing spirits. As those within that compass stand upon Calvary's ground of victory, and grow up into Him in all things who is the Head, even Christ, all the power of the enemy is shown to be broken. It is simply a matter of the increase of Christ.

Look on and see what is possible when things are like this. Blessed be God, in spite of our differences (if we were left to ourselves sooner or later we should all find a point of disagreement with one another; we should all find some place in which we could not get on with one another. Human nature can provide endless resource for difficulties), though there be as many temperaments, constitutions, languages and nations as people in this world, this fact remains that when Christ is in us there is something mightier than all that. All we have to do is to give Christ right of way, and see to it that He has His full place as *All*; and these other things must begin to lose their power. From time to time it seems as though the Lord allows an issue to arise in order that there might be a display of His triumph more than ever.

We see what is before us. We see the challenge of this. It is the measure of Christ. It is a terrible thing that it should be, and that we should have to say it, but divisions only declare very eloquently that there is failure in the measure of Christ. If we, as believers, are not speaking the one language, as God's own children are not expressing the one life, it simply means that somewhere, somehow, for some reason Christ has been checked in us. Of course, we all have to grow up into this. We do not get the fulness of Christ at once, but it is marvellous what can be when the Lord has a free and clear way. There will have to be, then, some letting go on our part to the Lord, and when we let go to the Lord everything is resolved.

We have looked, as it were, through a small hole in the fence, and seen a large field. Anything that belongs to the old Adam life, to the old cursed world-order should not be there. What does obtain in that sphere? Christ as All and in all. That is the glorious fact of God's triumph; that is the glorious method of the working out of that triumph; that is the glorious means of realising that end, when all that belongs to this disordered world has been banished from this universe, and everything shall be Christ. That is also the challenge to us as to how much of Christ there is. Oh! what a wonderful Christ He is if in His own Person He can undo that terrible history, and begin in us — even while we are in this world, still encumbered about with all that old thing, still in the flesh with that old thing still in our blood, even here in the midst of it all, begin in us to show that triumph. He has done it, and He does do it. Pentecost was a marvellous exhibition of how Christ has triumphed over a disordered race, and a disordered, a disrupted history. They had all things common, and broke bread from house to house and called nothing that they possessed their own. That is an expression of Christ in glory, as the result of a great victory.

We want more of that Testimony. And to say that simply means more of Christ. Let us get away from trying to deal with the things themselves. It is a circuitous and tortuous way of trying to deal with the things. Let us get to the Lord, and say: More of You, Lord, for this situation! Whatever the problem, whatever the difficulty, whatever the adversity, whatever it may be, Lord, You are the answer to it! More of the Lord will settle it all.

So we magnify Christ. We see what He can do, because of what He has done and what He is doing in us. What God is doing in this age is making a corporate man, secretly; so secretly sometimes that even we in whom it is going on do not recognise it. We very rarely feel it, but it is going on. We shall find in times of emergency that the Lord has done something in us; in times of crisis, that something has happened; that we act and react very differently from how we did in the old days; the course which we take is not the course which we once took. Something has happened, although we are so conscious of how much more there is to be done. He is making this new man, and in this new man neither Jew nor Greek, nor any other nationality; neither phlegmatic, sanguine, choleric nor any other temperament. No! a different man steadily triumphing in us. It is all Christ.

Are you a part of that man? In other words: Are you a part of God's work in this age? In other words still: Are you in Christ, or are you still outside of God's purpose in this age, and His activity; outside of Christ, missing the intention of God for your very life? You must know where you stand. If you are outside, the door is wide open to you to get inside immediately. If you are inside, set your heart continually unto the increase of Jesus Christ, and have the position fully and finally established that Christ is all, so that you come to the place of the apostle when he was able to say of himself: "*For me to live is Christ*". What a statement! What a position! For me to have a being at all means Christ! The Lord bring that about in every one of us.