

## **CHRIST IN US; CHRIST AS US; CHRIST THROUGH US**

By Jim Fowler, contributing writer

### **PART 4: CHRIST THROUGH US**

Jesus Christ functionally expressing His life as us, necessarily merges into an understanding of "Christ *through* us." As previously explained, the operational union of Christ as us, expressing His life and character through our behavior, was addressed in the previous section; whereas, Christ functioning *through* us in extension to other persons will be the focus of our explanation here. These concepts are obviously integrated and should not be made into rigid categories or definitions. Much of our explanation of Christ's operational function as us, could just as well have been explained as Christ's functional expression *through* us."

Having noted how the character of Christ is expressed in Christian behavior by "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23), we now note that the ministry of Christ is performed *through* us by the "gifts of the Spirit" (cf. Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:8-16). The "fruit of the Spirit" has to do with the functional expression of the character of Christ, while the "gifts of the Spirit" have to do with the ministry of Christ to others in the context of the Body of Christ. It is most lamentable that in many portions of the Church today, the "gifts of the Spirit" are regarded as marks of spirituality or trophies of spiritual possession, rather than as the means of Christ's ministry *through* Christians. The "gifts of the Spirit" should not be viewed as separated or detached entities or abilities, but only as the functional grace-expressions by which Christ ministers *through* any Christian in a given situation of another's need (cf. Fowler, *Charismata: Rethinking the so-called "Spiritual Gifts"*).<sup>1</sup>

The ministry activity of Jesus Christ during His historical, earthly ministry was accomplished as "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5) and the "*man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him*" (Acts 2:22). Jesus carefully explained that He did nothing of His own initiative (Jn. 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10), but declared, "*the Father abiding in Me does His works*" (Jn. 14:10). How did Jesus do what He did in His earthly ministry? Even the "miracles and wonders and signs" were what "God performed *through* Him."

Doctor Luke later writes, "*All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles*" (Acts 15:12). In like manner, as Jesus ministered by being receptive to God's activity *through* Him, the apostles ministered in supernatural ways as God functioned *through* them. Writing to the Romans, Paul explained, "*I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit*" (Rom. 15:18-19). This is obviously a very explicit reference to Christ's function *through* the Christian.

The Greek word used in these references just cited is the Greek preposition *dia*, which has a primary and direct meaning of procession *through* an object, place, or person. It often conveys the meaning of extension *through*, that goes beyond and out from the object, place, or person. This idea of extension beyond ourselves unto others is important in the understanding of "Christ

*through* us" as Christians. A secondary, instrumental meaning of *dia* is "by means of," which allows the word to have the same secondary meaning as the Greek preposition *en*, revealing that these prepositions tend to overlap one another in meaning and must not be treated with rigid precision.

The presence and function of the living Jesus *in*, *as*, and *through* the Christian is not for the purpose or objective of making us spiritually, bloated "knowers," full of pride in our alleged "spirituality" and what we "know" as Gnostic elitists. The only thing, the only One, we know is Him (Jesus Christ), in an ontological knowing of relational intimacy, rather than an epistemological knowledge of data that merely puffs us up in arrogance (1 Cor. 8:1). The One we know is Jesus. Jesus is God (John 10:30). "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8, 16). God, as love, is a Self who has no needs and exists only for others, expressing Himself in grace and love and givingness. Therefore, when Jesus functions *in* us, and *as* us, and *through* us, He is always expressing Himself in grace and love for others.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is written, "*He (Christ) always lives to make intercession*" (Heb. 7:25), for His is a permanent priesthood (Heb. 7:24). In that case, He must live *in* us, and *as* us, and *through* us to make intercession for others. Christians have long advocated "intercessory prayer" for others, but seldom have they considered what it means to engage in "intercessory lives" or "intercessory ministry" for others. The intent of God in Christ was to provide for "*a kingdom of priests*" (Ex. 19:6) who would function as a royal intercessory priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), as "*priests of the Lord; you will be spoken of as ministers of God*" (Isa. 61:6) for others. Christians are that kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10), wherein the sacrificial and intercessory character of God is to function for others.

Without thought for Himself, Jesus "*laid down His life*" (1 Jn. 3:16; cf. John 10:17-18) for others, and as He lives *in* and *through* the Christian He will continue to express the same self-sacrifice, self-surrender, and self-giving that is inherent in God's character. As Christians "*lay down their lives for the brethren*" (1 Jn. 3:16), it is not for the same redemptive and propitiatory purpose that was singularly fulfilled by the Person of Christ, but the same willingness to be an expendable investiture for others remains. Christians, thereby, begin to recognize that participation and fellowship (*koinonia*) with Christ is not only the commonality of union with Him in an identity that expresses itself *as* us, but also involves participating in "*the fellowship (koinonia) of His sufferings*" (Phil. 3:10). As Paul invested himself in ministry unto others, he indicated he was "*filling up what was lacking in Christ's affliction*" (Col. 1:24), because Christ continued to suffer *in* and *as* him. "*The sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance*" (2 Cor. 1:5), but "*we suffer with Him so that we might be glorified with Him*" (Rom. 8:17), Paul wrote in other letters. "Christ *through* us" involves being willing "*to stand in the gap*" (Ezek. 22:30) for others, recognizing that our present physical bodies and lives are expendable, since we have the spiritual continuity and perpetuity of Christ's eternal life.

"Christ *through* us" is the extension of Christ's ministry *through* Christians. The objective of that ministry is not for self-indulgent progression unto knowledge or spirituality, but is always Christ giving Himself to and for others *in* us, *as* us, and *through* us.

#### FOOTNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Fowler, James A., *Charismata: Rethinking the so-called "Spiritual Gifts."* ©1999 by James A. Fowler.  
<http://www.christinyou.net/pages/chrsmata.html>

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