

I

IMAGE OF CHRIST

BELOVED—TO LEARN OF CHRIST IS TO LEARN OF HIS LOVE

Like so many things in life, our image of Christ, and our life as a Christian, is as a myriad colored truth. The key is: to discover what the essential truth is, and make that the foundation of our life and understanding. Without that foundation of truth, we shall not see Christ's way, or live in His will.

Our goal as Christians is to be like Christ, then let us look to Christ, and learn of Him.

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the
Father, but through Me. —John 14:6 NASV

We know Jesus is the Son of God. He and the Father are one. Jesus proclaimed this Himself while on earth. John 10:30. Christ was one with the Father while on earth, and in heaven. They are of one mind, one heart, one purpose, and one nature.

Therefore, as we learn of Christ, we learn of the Father. As we apprehend and embrace the image of Christ, we see the image of God. For Christ is God revealed to us, and our perfect ensample of the fulfillment of the Father's will.

Being one therefore, what moved the Father, moved the Son as well. Their purpose and motive was the same when Christ came to us.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten
Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but
have everlasting life. —John 3:16 KJV

The Father, moved by His love and compassion for us, sent His beloved Son to us. Christ was also moved by this same love and compassion. He came on account of the love He had for us, and the love He had for His Father. From the beginning, Christ was moved by love. All that He accomplished while on earth was born of that love. His works were begotten in love, and it was because of love that He did all things.

God, through His love and compassion, had mercy upon us. He did not judge or condemn us. Rather, the Father through His forbearance gave us His Son, that we may be able to live with Him forever. He wanted to reconcile us to Himself, and draw us into an everlasting covenant of grace through His Son.

Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.
—Psalm 85:7 KJV

So we might say, God was moved by love, and constrained by mercy. In as much as He loved us, He sent us His Son. Looking upon us with compassion, He did not deal with us according to our failings, but shewed us His mercy. Christ was sent on a mission of

mercy. His ministry was one of love and compassion. Jesus is God's love come to us.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. Just as the father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.

—Psalms 103:8,10-11,13 NASV

We have heard that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, and so it is. Yet, the fear of God is rarely taught, and not commonly understood. However, it is essential to our walk with God.

Fear of God, is a deep reverence for the Lord. It is to bow down before the awesome all powerful God, and tremble at His word. It ends in a fear of failing to do what is right in the eyes of God. Godly fear is an absolute respect for God's holy ordinances and commandments, and an accountability between one's self and God.

Moreover, God's word tells us there is no fear in love. That perfect love casts out fear. I John 4:18. Nevertheless, as children of the Lord we fail to abide in the perfect love of God. Though we may not always be moved by love we should always submit to His will and His commandments with contrite hearts, in reverence to our Lord. Godly fear works with the love of God, and our love for God, to lead us into a righteous and holy life in Christ. Those who have lost the fear of the Lord, or their love for Him, are likely to stray from the truth, to ignore God's commandments and His will for their life.

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.

—Hebrews 12:28-29 KJV

Therefore, fear God, children, that you may see the truth, and walk in the way of Christ.

Let us look to Christ, and follow Him.

And they shall call His name Emmanuel...God with us.

—Matthew 1:23 KJV

Jesus Christ, the son of man, came to earth to reach out to us. He came from heaven to lead us into the kingdom of God. He gave up all He had in heaven and relinquished all that He had as God to come to us as a man, and the servant of man.

Christ, our Lord, gave up His life for us. He gave up all He had to give. His life is a gift in itself, a living sacrifice, and the supreme ensample of giving.

My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

—Matthew 27: 46 NASV

For Christ to come to earth as a man, and the servant of man, was an endowment of love. To allow himself to be mocked and whipped and beaten was giving. Being crucified for us, certainly that was giving.

However, Christ never gave more than when He took upon Himself the sins of us all. Wherefore, and in that time, Jesus was momentarily abandoned by His beloved Father, and judged in our place. In a real sense Christ was out of communion with His Father. This is the greatest gift, and the greatest ensample of giving that has ever been. It was the supreme act of love of all time.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down
His life for His friends. — John 15:13 KJV

We who know the Lord know this; that He did this out of love. The love of Jesus is fervent, passionate, complete, and perfect. God is love. His love is never ending and without measure. It is overwhelming, awesome, and unimaginable. Who can comprehend the all inclusive love of God?

The love of God is profound in essence, and forever enduring. It transcends our comprehension, and is absolute in abundance. God's love fills the heavens and earth as flowing rivers of passion for mankind.

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory,
to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man;
That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being
rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with
all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and
height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth
knowledge, that ye might be filled with the fullness of God.

—Ephesians 3:16-19 KJV

We all have come to Christ because of His love for us. We love Him because He first loved us. I John. 4:19. We are drawn by His love, kept in His love, and pardoned by an act of His love.

Jesus did all things in love! I Corinthians 16:14.

To truly know God fully is to know the love of Christ. To be replete in the Lord is to be filled with God's love by His Spirit.

Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with
lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

—Jeremiah 31:3 KJV

Therefore, we see that what marked Christ's life and His ministry was love. He is the appearance and perfect ensample of love. It is the first thing we learn of Him as children. All His children everywhere know Him by His love.

Only a child can know this love. And unless we come to Jesus as little children, we can not know Him at all. As we know Jesus, we shall know His love. His love will fill our hearts to overflowing, and we shall be as little children. We shall be the children of the Lord.

Whereas love is essential, even preeminent to our image of Christ, there is more.

The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, And
to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death,
Upon them a light dawned. —Matthew 4:16 NASV

Christ came to earth to be a light unto the way of God, and the path to heaven. To illuminate righteousness, holiness, godliness, and the narrow road that leads to everlasting life. He came to lead us out of our darkness, so that we may see the truth, and turn to follow Him.

I am the light of the world; he that follows Me shall not walk
in darkness, but shall have the light of life.
—John 8:12 NASV

Jesus walked so that we would see, and know how to follow Him. All things were done so that we could mirror His example. To be able to walk as He walked, and follow Him. As we see the truth, and walk in His way; we too shall be a light unto the world. When we live in Christ, He lives in us by His Spirit; and His life is a bright light shining forth for all to see, unto the glory of God.

In Him was life; and His life was the light of men.
—John 1:4 KJV

There is only one way, and one truth, and only one through whom is life. That is Christ Jesus.

Our Lord came to free us from our bonds of sin and death. To lift us out of our despair. To proclaim the Gospel of good news that all are welcome through God's grace to come to Him. That we might be reconciled with God through Christ's death, washed clean by His blood; and resurrected anew with Him into life everlasting through His Spirit.

Hallelujah! Praise God in the highest.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the
world. — John 1:29 KJV

The essence of Christ's ministry was one of reconciliation. He came to reconcile us with God, to lift us up, and draw us into His eternal covenant of grace.

For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him.

—John 3:17 NASV

Jesus came not to judge us, but to take our judgment upon Himself. He came not to condemn, but to edify. Christ walked, lived, and taught in such a way as to be approachable. He was not a stumbling block between Himself and those He wished to reach out to. He was affable, not lecturing. Jesus was open and available to sit down with sinners. Christ's love did not take into account our failings.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. —Romans 5:1-2 KJV

Christ came that we might have faith and grace abundantly. Wherein, all those in Christ are now in right standing with God. That through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ we have forgiveness of our transgressions, and hope of an abundant life. For without Christ there is no hope.

That at that time ye were without Christ...having no hope, and without God in the world.

—Ephesians 2:12 KJV

There is nothing more important than hope for one drowning in despair. Christ is our hope, and the hope of all mankind. He came to lift us out of our misery, to bring hope to man.

Behold My servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My spirit upon Him, and He shall shew judgment to the gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the gentiles trust.

—Matthew 12:18-21 KJV

This Scripture is a great description of the gentleness of Jesus. I cherish it, and know that it's true. For until the time of judgment, He is reaching out to all in gentleness, love, compassion, and forbearance.

However, this Scripture tells us something else about Jesus that is important to

consider. Although Jesus was the Son of God; the Spirit of God was put upon Him by His Father. This took place just after He was baptized by John, and before the beginning of His ministry.

This was done so we could have faith to follow Christ's ensample, and to do the works that He did. To show us that we are to work through the power of the Holy Spirit, and not in our own strength. For our good works are God's work that He works in us, and through us, to the glory of the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me.

—John 5:30 KJV

Jesus sought to glorify His Father, not bring glory to Himself, to direct us to God His Father, and not to speak from Himself. To do so, He would not have been true to Himself, His Father's will, or His ministry. This too was done that we may follow Christ's ensample. We are to direct all to God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ; through whom is our salvation.

If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the one who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

—John 7:17-18 NASV

Moreover, we know Christ came to earth to do the will of God, His Father.

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent Me.

—John 6:38 KJV

While Jesus walked the earth, He was the consummate servant of the Father, the complete and perfect fulfillment of God's will. Christ was the exact representation of the glory of God, and the image of His beloved Holy Father.

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of His person. —Hebrews 1:3 KJV

God is love. And Christ is the image of God. The image of love.

As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

—I Corinthians 15:49 KJV

We who were lost and in darkness, now find our way in the light of Christ. Though we were dead, now we live, for He lives in us. Our life is His life which is in us through His Holy Spirit. We are being changed into the image of our Lord daily.

We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

—II Corinthians 3:18 KJV

All have come to the Lord knowing we can offer nothing, except ourselves. We cast all we have at the foot of the cross, and relinquish our lives unto the Lordship of Christ. As we abandon rule over our own lives, we gain true life, which is found in Christ Jesus our Lord by His Spirit. God through the work of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, labors to mold us into the image of His Son. As we deny ourselves, we are changed from our fallen corrupted nature, into the image of Christ. As we daily surrender unto our Lord's will and purpose for our lives, we shall see Christ, and walk in His way.

As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. —Colossians 2:6-9 KJV

Come to the Lord all you who are broken in spirit, and with contrite hearts, for this is the sacrifice of God, and He shall not turn you away. Psalm. 51:17. Come in faith as a little child, with arms open wide, and with a pure heart. Come unto Him with a sincere confession of Christ as your Savior, and accept Him as your precious Lord. Come, all you who desire Him, and He will receive you. For Jesus loves you.

Verily I say unto you, unless ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

—Matthew 18:3 KJV

Do not be led astray from the way. There is one dance to be danced. And do not turn from the truth. For there is one true way to live— the life of Christ, the life in Christ, the life of love.

Look to Jesus beloved, and follow Him. Know Him. For He is our Lord, and in Him

is found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:3. Cling to Jesus, as a child to its mother, and do what is good in His eyes. Let your life be a reflection of His life, and become as the image of Christ. The image of love.

Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified.

—Psalm 40:16 KJV

THE MASTER GARDENER

A master gardener went out into his garden to find a place to plant the seed of a fruit tree. He walked around his garden until he came upon a small piece of ground.

Now this particular spot of ground was choked by weeds, and most would of passed it by. But the master gardener knew that underneath all those weeds the ground was fertile, and it would be a good place to plant his seed.

The master gardener worked in that little piece of ground until all the weeds were gone. He then carefully prepared the soil, and planted his seed into the ground. He watered the soil, and watched over and tended that plot of land so the seedling sprouted into the sunlight.

The master gardener labored daily, nurturing and caring for his seedling. He kept the weeds from choking the seedling, and the sun shown on it all the day long. He provided all it needed to grow, and it grew into a great and glorious tree, which bore much good fruit. Wherein the master gardener was well pleased, and he loved that tree, and called it his own.

To elucidate: The master gardener is the Lord God, and He searches the earth for those that will be His. The ground, and or soil, are the soul of man, which lays useless. The weeds are the wages of sin and death which prevent the growth of anything good. However, the good Lord comes to us, and prepares us to receive His seed, which is the word of God. He plants His seed within us and works with His Spirit, the living water of God, to bring us into the life in Christ. The Lord then works in us so that we may become all He would have for us, and bear much fruit. Wherein we are His beloved, and He calls us His children.

In Christ, the word of God lives through His Spirit. The word of God needs the Holy Spirit in order to grow within us. The Spirit and the word work together within us unto all good works, to the Glory of God. In Christ we have the light of life, whom we reach out to, and have the direction in which to grow. The Spirit and the word, at work together, always prepare us to reach out to Christ, and conform us unto the Lord, and all He would have us to be.