

Christ for Us, Christ as Us, Christ in Us

By Paris Reidhead*

Perhaps your Bible is open to Chapter 8 of Romans. I suggest that you hold it open to these portions that will be before us, but the verse that will give us our entrance into the meditation of the morning is the 1st clause or sentence in the 25th verse of the 7th Chapter: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:25). There must have come something into the heart and life and experience of the Apostle that prompted such a raising of praise and of gratitude and of thanks giving, and there was.

This is, as thanksgiving usually is, associated with either great deliverance or great anticipation of deliverance. Thanks giving you know is quite different than one usually thinks it is being. It is not, as we often think, praise. Praise is adoration of God for what He is. It does not depend upon what has happened to us. Thanksgiving is gratitude for what He has done. Now there are three problems that the Apostle deals with in Chapters 5, 6 and 8. The three problems are these:

First, *what we have done*. Secondly, *what we are*. And thirdly, *how we are going to be and do what we ought*. And it is because he has faced these three problems with honesty and fairness, not trying to avoid them or explain them away that he has reason to say, I thank God. No one will ever be able to say; I thank God, as he said it, unless with the Apostle he too is prepared to face the problems that he confronts.

Psychiatry seemingly is dedicated to the task of making it easy for us to do the thing that God commanded us to do and we have been unwilling to do. Techniques are used which bring one to place where he is willing to say, see and to say what he has tried to hide and to cover. The difference, however, between the command of God obeyed, and the psychiatrist used is this, that when the psychiatrist has brought one to the place where he has seen himself and faced what he is, honestly and fairly, he has no therapy to change the man. He can change his thinking about himself, yes. Make certain adjustments to what he is, but essentially it is this: This is what you are, this is the kind of a person you are, now you will have to live with what you are. And there is not a great deal of hope in this when there is a continuous prompting of the Spirit of God to make us want to be something else. And so, as grateful as we are for the relief that has come to multitudes because of the kindly, thoughtful, intelligent assistance that they have received from psychiatrists, we must recognize that had the Word of God been obeyed, for the most part they would not have been needed.

Now, if you are in need, please do not think for a moment that this is any reflection upon you, because we are all the product of all the influences that have gone into us. But I want you to see today that the Apostle can say, I am thankful to God because He has been absolutely willing to face the three main problems that confront everyone in human pilgrimage. What we have done, what we are, and how we are going to be and to do what we ought.

Now we will have to take them in that order. You will discover if you will go back to the 14th verse of the 7th chapter with me that Paul gives us these three problems by 3 laws. The first law that we find — actually, I think we had better go a little further back than that. Let us go back to verse 7; in the 7th chapter and the 7th verse of Romans we read (until verse 13): "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" (Now the law he refers to, of course is the 10 commandments, the teachings, the revelation of God's will for men) "Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust," (or I had not realized that the desire that was there, the feelings that were there were lust) "except the law said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" (or evil desire). "For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Rom. 7:7-13).

The purpose of the Law, therefore, as was given by the Lord was to the end of revealing to us our need. I do not believe for a moment that men began to sin when the 10 commandments were given, and you know that this is not the case, because

Adam sinned, Eve sinned, Cain did, and across the ages this was preceding the giving of the 10 commandments. Sin had existed.

But what he had actually said was this, That the commandment reveals that the attitude is a crime, and gives to sin the character of transgression, and causes the sinner to stand before God as a criminal. The purpose of the law was to reveal what was in the heart, and the revelation that it makes of the heart is that all of sinned. The sentence of the law is, "The soul that sinneth it shall die" (Eze. 18:4). The effect of the law is, that death has passed upon all men for all have sinned. The Law was the schoolmaster to check off our examination and prove to us that we have failed. The Law was given that every mouth might be stopped and all the world might become guilty before God. The Law was given that our rebellion might be revealed for the crime it is, and that we might stand before God the criminals that He says we are. This is the purpose of the Law.

Now let us allow that the Spirit of God has used the Law to this end in your life at some time in the past, and if He has not done it in the past He must do it. You discover that the Law is the revelation of what a moral God requires of morally responsible creatures. The purpose of the Law was to protect the righteous. The fence has meaning to you only by – determined by which side of it you are. If you are on the outside, and want the farmer's apples and watermelons, then the fence is a barrier and an impediment to your pleasure. If you are the man who owns the watermelon and the apples, then it is a protection of your right and your pleasure. And so law was given that it might be revealed that God is interested in the happiness, the blessedness, of all creatures everywhere, and sin is actually the attitude of a racketeer, of a gangster, a moral rebel that says, I am not interested in the rights of others. I am only interested in my own. And this is the reason God deals with sinners so stringently, because they do not share in His governmental purpose which is the blessedness and fulfillment and greatest happiness of all creatures everywhere. And the effect of the Law revealed and applied to the heart is to disclose that the individual actually is before God under the sentence of death because he is open revolt against everything a just governor has ordained for His universe. So the purpose of the Law is to reveal what we are, to measure us, and to show us our relationship to God.

The world, you see, has rejected God by various processes of logic and philosophy, rejected His moral standards, rejected the revelation of His requirement, and has raised another standard which allows everyone to be normal, and healthy and happy, but of course it is the same way that you might have a lot 50 by 100. But you see if you can turn a foot into a yard, or a yard into a rod, you actually could have on paper quite a sizable piece of ground. But you know and I know that if you were to invent your own unit of measure it would not have changed the size of your yard at all. And the world, you see, has rejected God's standard, erected its own standard, and said, "Well, now we are all very, very good. There is no such a thing as moral requirement, moral responsibility. Sin is passé, it does not exist." So people still go on breaking themselves on the Law. Did you hear what I said? No one ever breaks the Law of God. God is eternal, and God has fixed His Law so it is unbreakable. People do not break the Law of God. All they do is break themselves on His Law. It is as though they have fallen from a height to land on the fence, and the fact that landing on the fence has crushed them, it did not crush the fence. And the Law remains after men have broken themselves upon it. It has not been affected by what has been done by the breaker. He did not break the Law; he broke himself, broke his mind, broke his heart, broke his spirit, and his possibility of happiness.

Now he is under the sentence of death, utter, total estrangement from God, and separation from the possibility of happiness and fulfillment and completeness, and God's reason for man's being.

Now if you will see and understand, then, that the purpose of the Law was to reveal the need and bring one to the place and to the point where they were prepared for grace. Here it has done its work. You, like the publican, have come to the point where you stood before His tribunal and absolutely consent that everything He says about is true. You have sinned. You are utterly unworthy, shot through with rebellion, totally committed to the crime that He has accused you of, and there is a mountain of guilt, made up of all you instances of rebellion in the past, the enormity of your crime rises before you, and you are facing this dilemma. If God were to say to the sinner today, "If you perfectly obey Me from this moment I will forgive all your past sin," he is as good as in hell. Because he knows his own heart well enough to know that he has neither the inclination nor the willingness to so obey God. And there is no hope in this. So this offers nothing.

Then if the mind were to conceive of this, I will perfectly obey God from today on, at the end of my lifetime of perfect obedience I will have accumulated enough merit to atone for my past sins, and this is utter folly. For the simple reason that there is no merit in obedience. Obedience is demanded, and its failure is punished. So to obey only protects one from punishment. It does not provide merit. You have to go beyond obedience in order to secure merit, and God has commanded perfect love, and there is nothing beyond that, so there is no possibility of accumulating merit with God, by what we do. And the consequence of that is that a life time of perfect obedience would not accumulate enough merit to atone for one sin, and there are a multitude of sins. What are we going to do? The law is just, holy and good and reveals the enormity of the crime of the heart. What are we going to do?

First we have got to recognize that the nature of our crime is that we refuse to have God in our knowledge. We would not let God be God. We refused to allow Him to reign and to rule. We turned to our own way, and became our own gods. And this is the essence of the crime. Now, before there can ever be anything done beyond this, one has to both see his crime as we have tried to express it, and then he has to renounce it. He has to cease from it. He has to change his purpose from pleasing himself to pleasing God. This is preparatory for anything that is to follow. There is no merit in this, for the fact that you purpose to do what you ought to have done all the time certainly can carry with it no merit. But it does predispose one for grace. And unless one purposes to please God, there is absolutely no possibility but a fearful looking for of judgment. And this purpose to please God we call repentance, a change of mind about how smart and clever it is to rule one's own way and one's own life. And we call this repentance. Now a repentant heart still, though purposing to please God, has a mountain of the past to deal with. What is he going to do?

And so the answer, the answer for which Paul can say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ," is the answer to my past sins, and we find it in the 5th chapter of the book of Romans, and in the 6th and the 8th verses (Rom. 7:25). In the 6th verse we read, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). But until we have come to the place where we recognize we are without strength we have no part in His death, for He died for those without strength, and this is why so many in the world today are strangers to His grace and utterly devoid of any forgiveness. They have never been brought to the place where they are without strength. And the consequence of that, they have no part in His death, for He died for those that were without strength. He died for those that had been ungodly, without God, but now those that benefit in His death are those that recognize that this no longer can be their attitude.

The 8th verse tells us, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died us" (Rom. 5:8). We know that all man everywhere are sinners, but there is no hope for them having any part in the death of Christ until they recognize that they are sinners and that they are the sinners that God said they were. And so the one that has seen himself a sinner, seen that the sin was that he refused to have God, and played God in his life, and did what he wanted to do, he sees this to be the sin God holds it to be, has part in the death of Christ.

Then we also discover that in the 10th verse, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son..." (Rom. 5:10). There must be a recognition that we were enemies against God, and that this further added to our crime, and compounded our guilt, so the ones that have part in the death of Christ are those that are weak, those that were sinners, those that were ungodly, and those that recognize that they were enemies. But my what a position one takes when he comes to Grace, utterly hopeless, absolutely at the end of himself, nothing to offer but the guilt, and nothing to bring but his need, and to come standing before God, utterly dependent upon the mercy of God. There is no place for bargaining here.

I wish every one of you would read, and read again, and read still again the book by the— the little colportage book. #1, All of Grace by Charles Spurgeon¹. It is the reason why Mr. Moody² founded the colportage association that he might distribute this book to a biblically ignorant, then biblically ignorant generation. And so he had it so that it could be procured for just a few cents. But you ought to read it in order that you heart can be overwhelmed again with the fact that it is all of grace, and that you have nothing to offer when you come, but your need, your mortal need, for you stand in the way of perishing until you see that the Lord Jesus Christ died for those without strength, for those who are ungodly, for those that were enemies. This is you.

1 Charles Haddon (C.H.) Spurgeon (1834-1892) British Particular Baptist Preacher

2 Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

You are the enemy. You are the ungodly. You are the one without strength. You are the sinner. And then you see that Christ died for you. And what happens? All your sin counted to His Son, and the righteousness of His Son counted to you. And you stand before God's Law justified. This has dealt with that first great need, What we have done. Justified, just as if I'd never sinned. So Romans, Chapter 5, is *Christ for us*.

But there is another need. It is not long after that until you discover that you have carried into the Christian life a traitor, someone that would betray you and betray the Lord, and that traitor is so difficult to identify, because of our self-deception. And so we have to read on into the 7th chapter, from verse 14, to identify the traitor. "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:14-24)

Now Paul has come to grips with the second problem. What he is. For this law of sin and death cannot be separated from the man. He has said, "In me and my flesh there dwelleth no good thing." Certainly he is not thinking of the corpuscles. He is not thinking of the molecules that make up his bone and teeth, and his hands. Sin is not resident in tissue. God is dealing with the man. When he speaks of the flesh, he is speaking of himself as the one who has lived through his flesh, through his body, and the end of his being has been his pleasure on the level of his own satisfaction. He is speaking of himself. He is seeing himself as he was, standing outside the door of grace. We must identify the old man with us, with ourselves, with what we are. Otherwise we fail to realize the enemy and we do not deal with it. As long as you can make the problem an excrescence of personality, something that is more or less like dandruff of the soul, that it is not really you at all, it is just something that sort of flakes off, that you cannot control, and then you can be content. But the moment that you discover that the problem is you, that the problem is yourself, that you are your own worst enemy, you have been living in grief because you have been living in tyranny to yourself, then I say one can come to the place where they are prepared to say with Paul, "I thank God." Why could he say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ?" Because he had come to see himself as his enemy. He had come to see himself as the one who had caused the problem and he is prepared to identify himself with all of the difficulties he has encountered. He has purposed to please God. He has committed himself to the will of God. He has embraced the plan of God for his life. And he wants to please God. But he says, "When I serve with my mind the law of God, I find another law." What is this law? It is the law of trait. It is the law of tendency. It is the law of disposition. It is the law of attitude. You do what you do because of a trait. Well what is a trait? It is the expression of your ego. It is the manner in which you have characteristically responded to certain opportunities and stimulate and situations. This is your trait. He has a trait to lie when he is under pressure. He has a trait to get mad when he is cross. He has a trait. A trait? What do you mean, a trait? This is the developed means by which you have responded to certain situations. This is your expression. Attitudes are the same. Disposition the same. And so actually when you come down to it, the old man is simply the accumulation of attitudes, traits, dispositions and tendencies... What you have become, the means you have taken of expressing your own governmental principles. So after you have repented, after you have come to God, you still discover that there are leakages of memory, habits of thought, attitudes and traits and tendencies which are in complete contradiction to the principle you have embraced when you have said, "I want to please Jesus Christ." And so you say, "What am I going to do about my traits? What am I going to do about my tendencies? What am I going to do about my attitudes?"

Well, there are two things that we can do. The first is to do what the legalist did, and every time he did something wrong he brought a sacrifice to the temple. This certainly is not God's answer. It is condemned in the Book of Galatians. Then there were others, as we read about in the 1st verse of the 6th chapter, that said, Well God gets glory when we sin so let's sin and give Him a chance to get more glory. This is antinomianism. Both of these have been condemned in the Word.

What are we going to do about ourselves? What are we going to do about our traits? What are we going to do about these attitudes? Well we have got to trace them right back that the attitude is me, the trait is me, the tendency is me, the habit of mind is me. This is an expression of me. And when God looked at me He saw me so horribly ruined by sin that He threw up His hands as it were and said, There is not a thing in the world I can do with him. And so He took me and put me on the refuse heap. He put me there on the garbage can, if you please, for I insist that the cross rather than being an emblem that ought to be worn around the neck it is just as right to say that as to have a galvanized tin in symbolic form hanging around your neck. This is the place where Rome put those who were utterly incapable of anything else. Didn't even honor them by a decent assassination and execution. The cross was reserved for the hopeless, the helpless, and the totally defiled. And when God chose that the means of my redemption should be His Son on the cross, He said to the angels and to devils and men, This person is so ruined by sin that I cannot find anything to do with him but to put him on the refuse. Oh, it is a terrible thing to have to come to that place in regard to one's self. No wonder one will use every kind of psychological trickery to escape from it, because it is such an inditement, such a terrible place to bring ourselves, to the fact that there is nothing good in us, and that the whole has been so contaminated by the essence of the bad that we cannot separate— we spend our time trying to separate the good and the bad.

I talked some time ago with a person that came to me, saying, You don't know how bad I am. Oh, I am terrible, I as horrible. And when he had finished with this, I said, Yes, didn't you know that? We all know that. That's common knowledge. And he thought that it was in a personal sense. And he said, Has someone been talking about me? I said, No, no one has been talking about you, but God. And when God put His Son on the Cross this is exactly what He said about you. This is where He put you. This is what He said about you. This is what He said about me. And the frustration comes from putting our head down into the refuse bin trying to find something good so we can hold it up and say, Look, God, I wasn't as bad as you said I was. And it is utterly hopeless.

And Paul says, I can thank God, because he has come to the place that in himself he looks for nothing but failure and uncleanness. Oh, that we could see that. Why? You say, Well this is despair. This is the ultimate failure. Yes, but it is the ultimate victory. And so we come to Romans 5. We see Christ for us. But you cannot stop there. And oh, what a pity it is that so many of God's dear children have taken Romans 5, cut the rest of the Book of Romans out of the Bible and said, This is all I need, justification for past sins. It is not all you need. You will be brought into bondage. You will be brought into grief; you will be brought into despair. You will be brought into mental sickness and spiritual disintegration if you stop there. You cannot stop in Romans 5. If you stop in Romans 5 you only take a portion, like a person that is willing to be brought out of the water, but he will stay. He has his head above water and he hangs onto the rope, and he is not drowning, but he is going to freeze to death because he is in the frigid water. And for one to say, I am content to just be here with my head above and freezing below, this is ultimate folly. And so, Paul say, I thank God. Why? He says, I thank God because I see that in me and my flesh there is no good thing. I have come to peace with myself. I have stopped looking for anything from me other than what God said I was. So this is a terrible message. This is depressing. Oh no it is not, because you see God did something about that.

And you find this in Romans 6. Romans 5 tells us that *Christ died for us*. But Romans 6 tells us that *Christ died as us*. And so in Romans 6:6 you read: "Knowing this, that our old man (that is the accumulation of tendencies and traits, and habits and attitudes, and everything that was against God) our old man is crucified with Christ." That the day He died I died. Oh, the marvel of it. Oh, the wonder of it. Oh, the glory of it that the Lord Jesus not only died for me, but He died as me, that thus in God's eyes I am already dead. And so He says, If you will recognize this and realize that Christ died **for** you, but He died **as** you, and if you will reckon yourself to be dead, the reckoning will release. We have lights on. Why? Because there was a time when in building this, they were willing to invest the money, or subsequently, to wire it, and so all we had to do today to enjoy the light was to put the switch on, but we could have sat in darkness if we had not realized it was wired, if we had not known where the switch was. And so there are some that sit in failure because they never realized that Christ died for them, and there are others that sit in failure because they are not willing to put the switch on. And the switch is reckoning yourself to be dead. In the moment of temptation and need reckoning yourself to be dead, and the reckoning releases His life. Romans 5, *Christ For Us*, Romans 6, *Christ As Us*. This is how He dealt with the second paramount problem of our lives. What we are. He went as us

to the Cross. He died that He might deliver us from ourselves. No wonder Paul could say, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But he did not stop there. Oh, how satisfied we are with how little. He went on. What is the next? In the 8th Chapter and I read for it, but turn that you see it. In the second verse we read, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). There is a 3rd law. The law of God, just, holy and good which slew me. The law of sin and death which told me that that which was slain was utterly hopeless. But now I find another law, not the law of enthusiasm, not the law of dedication, not the law of put your finger nails into the heel of your hand and grit your teeth, not the law that promise God, Give me this once and I'll never do it again. This law of human endeavor can lead only to grief. No, there is another law. It is the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ, setting me free from the law of sin and death.

Now in whom is this law? Everyone acts according to his nature, whether he is a bird in the air, a fish in the sea, a beast in the forest, or a man. Everyone acts according to his nature. And Paul has said, My nature is bad. I am bad. And I have found my place crucified with Christ. But then he said, There is another whose law is right. This One is Jesus Christ. And so he said, "The law of the Spirit of Life" —for when the Holy Spirit enters and possesses, and controls, He acts according to His nature. And "the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ makes me free from the law of sin and death." So the Cross gives you victory in the instance, but it is the presence of the Person who in accord with His nature lives His life. And this is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ which makes us free from the law of sin and death. So what do we have?

Here it is. The mountain of my sin, this enormous accumulation of guilt that separated me from God, God dealt with that. *Christ for us*. Then what I am, the total depravity of my nature and heart and mind and spirit, God dealt with that. *Christ as us*. The utter inability and weakness of every resource I possess to be or to do, God dealt with that. Christ in us. Do you see it? Romans 5, *Christ for us*. Romans 6, *Christ as us*. Romans 8, *Christ in us*. This is the message. This is life. This is the whole of His redeeming grace. No wonder Paul could put his hands up and say, I thank God through Jesus Christ the three major problems of my life are met. What I have done, what I am, and how I am going to be and do what I ought. No wonder he could say, I thank God. Now again, Christ for us from the penalty of sin. Christ as us, from the power of ourselves. Christ in us, to do and to accomplish all that is His will and His purpose. Isn't that a glorious salvation?

Where are you? Isn't it easy now? You can find yourself somewhere. Perhaps you have not even come to Romans 5 yet. Come today. Perhaps you are in Romans 5 and you haven't come to Romans 6. Come today. Perhaps you are in Romans 6 and you have never come into 8. Come today. And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Let him that hears say, Come. And whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely. It is all in Christ. *Christ for us, Christ as us, Christ in us*.

Shall we pray. We thank and praise Thee, our Father, that Thou hast loved us when Thou hast known the worst about us. We ask Thee to forgive us for trying to bypass Thee, hide what we were, and cover what we were. We have robbed Thee of glory, robbed ourselves of joy, and robbed the Lord Jesus of the satisfaction of seeing the salvation He purchased worked out in the lives of His people. We ask Thee, Father, today that there may come to us that transparency of heart that causes us to agree with Thee about us, sinners, to stand self-confessed, agreeing that what Thou hast said is true, to receive mercy. Christians, standing, bankrupt, knowing that in themselves no good thing, to receive deliverance. And then all to stand before Thee, candidates for the fullness of Christ, that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ may fulfill all Thy will and way and work and purpose. We thank Thee for so great a salvation. With Paul we say, I thank God through Jesus Christ. Now meet us, Lord. May there be a moving in, even now while we wait a moving into life, a moving into truth, a moving into Christ. In the Name and for the sake of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, April 1, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.