

COMPLETE IN HIM (6)

We continue to deal with foundational facts, since the life can be no better than its root, its source. Youth and immaturity tend to act first and think later, if at all. Maturity has learned to take time to assess the facts. Our patient Husbandman is willing for us to take time and learn the eternal facts, without which we cannot be brought to maturity.

Our Lord Jesus so often uses natural facts in order to teach the deepest spiritual truths. He first teaches us about our natural, Adamic life before we can understand and appreciate our new spiritual, Christ-life. This involves the vital source principle: "after its kind." Every believer first learns that he is complete in Adam -- he sprang from him: he is like him. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19a). "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18a). When, through our failures and struggles, He has taught us about the natural, we will be ready to learn of our spiritual Source. "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him" (Colossians 2:9-10a).

There are two main aspects to this source principle. First, the Lord Jesus is the Source of our Christian life -- we were born into Him; God has made us complete in Him. This truth we are to hold by faith; it is true of each of us. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ..." (2 Corinthians 5:17a). Second, as we hold to this fact by faith, we are brought into the practical reality of it day by day in our experience. Little by little we receive that which is already ours. The important thing to know and be sure of is that all is ours, we are complete in Him, NOW. This fact enables us to hold still while He patiently works into our character that life of ours which is hid with Christ in God.

"Progress is only advancing in the knowledge, the spiritual knowledge, of what we really possess at the outset. It is like ascending a ladder. The ladder is grace. The first step is, we believe that the Lord Jesus was sent of God; second, that in the fulness of His work we are justified; third, we make His acquaintance; fourth, we come to see Him in heaven; we know our association with Him there, and His power here; fifth, we learn the mystery, the great things we are entitled to because of being His body; sixth, that we are seated in heavenly places in Christ; seventh, lost in wonder and in praise in the knowledge of Himself." --J. B. Stoney

Since we are complete in our Lord Jesus, it will not do to try and add to that finished work. It is now a matter of walking by faith and receiving, appropriating, from the ever-abundant Source within. Walter Marshall is concise here: "Christ's resurrection was our resurrection to a life of holiness, as Adam's fall was our fall into spiritual death. And we are not ourselves the first makers and formers of our new holy nature, any more than of our original corruption, but both are formed ready for us to partake of them. And by union with Christ, we partake of that spiritual life that He took possession of for us at His resurrection,

and thereby we are enabled to bring forth the fruits of it; as the Scripture showeth by the similitude of a marriage union. Romans 7:4: 'Married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.'"

Our part is not production, but reception of our life in Christ. This entails Bible-based fact finding; explicit faith in Him and His purpose for us in Christ; and patient trust while He takes us through the necessary processing involved. No believer ever fell into maturity, even though he is complete in Christ. Spiritual growth necessitates heart-hunger for the Lord Jesus; determination, based upon assurance, to have that which is ours in Him, plus meditation and thought. We will never come into the knowledge of our spiritual possessions through a superficial understanding of the Word. How can we ever expect to have intimate fellowship with One we know little of?

The following truth by J. T. Beck may be a good opportunity to exercise and develop some of that meditation and thought. "What is needed is a meditation, in which God concentrates His own peculiar Spirit and Life as a principle in a human individual to be personally appropriated. In a revelation, which is really to translate the Divine into man's individual personal life, in truth, to form men of God, the Divine as such -- that is, as a personal life -- must first be embodied in a personal center in humanity. For this reason; as soon as something strictly new is concerned, something that in its peculiarity has not yet existed, every new type of life, before it can multiply itself to a number of specimens, must first have its full contents combined in perfect unity, in an adequate new principle. And so, for the making personal of the Divine among men, the first thing needed is one in whom the principle of the Divine life has become personal.

"Christianity concentrates the whole fulness of revelation in the one human personality of Jesus Christ as Mediator -- that is, as the mediating central principle of the new Divine organism, in its fulness of Spirit and Life, in and for the human personal life. With the entrance of Christ into the human individual, the Divine life becomes imminent in us, not in its universal world-relation, but as a personal principle, so that man is not only a being made of God, but a being begotten of God. And with the growing transformation of the individual into the life-type of Christ there is perfected the development of the personal life out of God, in God, and to God -- the development not only of a moral or theocratic communion, but a communion of nature!"

A seed embodies in full the reproduction of the life from which it came. That much is complete, and can never be added to. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (1_Peter 1:23a). "Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed" (Leviticus 19:19). It is to be "not I, but Christ." The Seed has been implanted -- now the entire question is one of growth and maturity. This alone will bring forth fruit that abides. "The development of the divine life in the Christian is like the natural growth in the vegetable world. We do not

need to make any special effort, only place ourselves under the conditions favorable to such growth."

Only those who have sought to grow by effort and failed are in the position to appreciate the fact that God is the aggressor in the realm of development. "All the powers of Deity which have already wrought together in the accomplishment of the first part of the eternal purpose, the revealing of the Father's perfect likeness in the Man Christ Jesus, are equally engaged to accomplish the second part, and work that likeness in each of God's children." Wm. Law agrees: "A root set in the finest soil, in the best climate, and blessed with all that sun and air and rain can do for it, is not so sure a way of its growth to perfection, as every man may be whose spirit aspires after all that which God is ready and infinitely desirous to give him. For the sun meets not the springing bud that stretches toward him with half that certainty as God, the Source of all good, communicates Himself to the soul that longs to partake of Him."

Not only is our life complete in Him, but likewise the essential victory in all the many exigencies of that life. "When you fight to get victory, then you have lost the battle at the very outset. Suppose the Enemy assaults you in your home or in your business. He creates a situation with which you cannot possibly deal. What do you do? Your first instinct is to prepare yourself for a big battle and then pray to God to give you the victory in it. But if you do so defeat is sure, for you have given up the ground that is yours in Christ. By the attitude you have taken you have relinquished it to the Enemy. What then should you do when he attacks? You should simply look up and praise the Lord. 'Lord, I am faced with a situation that I cannot possibly meet. Thine enemy the Devil has brought it about to compass my downfall, but I praise Thee that Thy victory is an all-inclusive victory. It covers this situation, too. I praise Thee that I have already full victory in this matter.' --Watchman Nee

P.S. Don't rush -- He won't. "The Japanese artist, Hokusai, said, 'From the age of six I had a mania for drawing the forms of things. By the time I was fifty I had published an infinity of designs; but nothing I produced before seventy is worth considering.' He died at eighty-nine, declaring that if he could have only another five years he would have become a great artist."