

---

---

# INTIMACY WITH CHRIST

---

---

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE TABERNACLE OF TESTIMONY.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.

THE LOVE THAT LASTS; THE JOY THAT  
LASTS; THE BEAUTY THAT LASTS. (Address  
at a Marriage Meeting.)

MADE AND  
PRINTED IN ENGLAND.

# Intimacy with Christ.

(GEN. XXI. 6-12 ; EPH. III. 10-21.)

I SUPPOSE that most of us remember singing in our young convert days that little hymn :

“ Oh ! happy day that fixed my choice,  
On Thee, my Saviour and my God.”

And doubtless we remember, too, how heartily we joined in the chorus :

“ Happy day ! happy day !  
When Jesus washed my sins away.”

Well, I trust we still sing it sometimes. It would be to me a most unhappy day if a time ever came when I could not sing it as heartily as ever. It is well to foster the simpler affections of the soul ; those affections which were so fresh and buoyant when first we learnt to love the Lord. Some of us may not be able to fix the exact day when our sins were washed away, but “the great trans-

## INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.

action," if it *has* been done, must have been done on some day, and that day surely was a happy day.

But I want to say something about another happy day, which all of us ought to know something of, and it is the day when Christ becomes supreme in our affections. For many a day Ishmael and Isaac shared the same house together, but there came a time when Ishmael had to go, and Isaac became the one and only object of the house. "Abraham made a great feast the day that Isaac was weaned," and I think it was on that day that Ishmael mocked and was cast out. There comes a day in the experience of all of us when the question faces us, Is it to be Ishmael and Isaac together (self and Christ), or is it to be Isaac alone (Christ alone)?

Divided affections are the bane of the Christian's life. If we shelve, or otherwise avoid facing the question, it *may* come again and again, for grace is very patient with us; but some day the die is cast, and our choice is

final ; we say a final " Yes " or " No." Of course, if we say " Yes," the resolution must be maintained in our souls. As J. B. S. once said, " Ishmael knows the house well, and if you put him out at the door, and are not careful, he will creep in through the window." But still I think there comes a day with all of us when we make a definite decision as to this great matter, and our whole after history tells what that decision has been.

I have in my mind two young men I knew years ago, who were both faced with this question. One made a fatal decision—fatal to his soul's prosperity ; the other got with God about it all. He said, " I know if I choose this path of worldly emolument and advantage which has been offered to me it will mean little time for private prayer and reading, and also the absenting of myself from the week-night meetings ; so I will refuse it. Christ must be first and last and only." Both those men, though young no longer, are still breaking bread

## *INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.*

with us, but what a moral gap separates them. The one who put the world before Christ just breaks bread, that is all! The other is a help to the saints and a gospel worker—a pillar of the meeting he is in!

Sarah laughed when Isaac was born—God made her laugh. That is how Isaac got his name, which means “laughter.” Sarah’s joy portrays the maternal joy that should fill our hearts when a new-born babe is brought into the family of God. The interest and care she displayed toward little Isaac surely suggests the maternal instincts and affection and solicitude that should be felt and shewn in the assembly as regards the young and weak.

Isaac was fed and nurtured and clothed, and so he grew. The church of God is to the babes just a nursery in which they are looked after. Suppose the child had not grown, would it not have been a grief to his parents? How grievous is it to God when His children are stunted and dwarfed. The soul should grow, not simply

in truth and understanding, but *in itself*. "Growing," says Paul, "by the true knowledge of God." Our spiritual faculties must be developed. Isaac—that is to say, Christ characteristically—must be more and more formed in us if we are to mature in the things of God.

Some one has said that there are two classes of babes in God's family: those who have just been born and those who have never grown. Let us seek to grow, and thus reach manhood in Christianity. For this we must be "*weaned*." There was joy in Abraham's household the day Isaac was weaned. The weaning process is sometimes very trying, but it must be experienced if we are to get on in soul. "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." (Isa. xxviii. 9.) When this takes place we get out of the nursery (I Thess. ii. 7) and into the school (Titus ii. 11-14), and

## INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.

thus we mature in soul and learn that the church of God has many other and higher spheres still.

The day that Isaac was weaned was a day of great gladness in the household. Everybody was pleased except Ishmael. Ishmael mocked. He felt that Isaac was going to supplant him, and the flesh never likes to abdicate. It took Isaac to bring out Ishmael's real character. Christ is the touchstone that tests everything. Bring Christ in, make everything of Him, and Ishmael—"that which is born of the flesh"—exposes himself and he must go. "Cast out this bondwoman and her son," said Sarah. Not only does Ishmael have to go, but the bondwoman—that is, the legal element which fosters Ishmael—must go too. "The thing was very grievous" to Abraham, for he clung to Ishmael. We naturally cling to him and say, as it were, "O that Ishmael might live before thee." Thus Abraham had prayed long before; but it is impossible. It was said of



Ishmael, "He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." And we read that "he died in the presence of all his brethren."

Man in the flesh can make a fair show in the flesh before man, but he cannot stand a moment before God. God was very good to Ishmael, but, reverently speaking, God made him no better. He was the child of an Egyptian woman, and his mother went and took for him a wife out of Egypt. Ishmael was Ishmael all through. Cultivate, culture, and even attempt to Christianise the flesh, as we may, but "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" and always is so. Ishmael was "a wild ass of a man" (chap. xvi. 12, New Trans.)—untamed and untameable. Ishmael ever hates Isaac. They can never be reconciled.

Whenever a little bit of Christ comes out in us individually, or from the meeting we are in, the enemy seeks to blot it out by Ishmael's mocking. Some one has well said, he does not assail the Christ in heaven, who is

## INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.

far out of his reach, what the enemy is against is the Christ *here*. Think of the moral turpitude of wicked men who, actuated by the flesh, battered in with stones a face that shone like an angel. (Acts vii.) Why did they do it? They stoned Stephen because Christ came out in him. In him for a moment there was the living moral perpetuation here of the Man in the heavens he was gazing upon. Ishmael will never love Isaac—never. Put him under law or under grace, under human philosophy or under moral suasion, but he remains unchanged.

Such is that hating and hateful principle which is in all of us, and which is always against Christ. As to fact it will remain in us till the end, but the Spirit of God seeks to displace it in us, and to foster and develop in our souls the true Isaac. Thus it is for us to treat it as a judged and cast out thing, which for faith and for God has been ended in the death of Christ.

## *INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.*

And now let us look briefly at what has much in it which is the counterpart of what we have been considering. The beloved apostle prayed for those Ephesian saints. How often he prayed for others! All his recorded prayers are pretty much for others. Do we imbibe his spirit? How often do we pray for the saints? My brother, my sister, have you a prayer list? What a help and an incentive to prayer it is to have a few names down on paper and to go over them night and morning before God! Said J. N. D., "Nothing tests the state of my soul more than my ability to pray for others."

How true! Paul "bows his knees," such is his intense exercise for his fellow believers. He prays that the Spirit of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ might strengthen them spiritually, so that "the Christ" might dwell in their hearts by faith. Notice it is "the Christ," that is to say, the Heir, the heavenly Isaac, the anointed Man. He is the One in whom are vested

## INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.

all the promises, and who is going to execute all the counsels of God, and fill the universe with the light and love of God. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." Think of that. He who is going to fill God's universal system wants meanwhile to fill our hearts! Can we refuse Him? He wants to live in the affections of His people; as the ark of old dwelt for three months in the house of Obededom and blest it amid all the strife and confusion around.

Said a sister to me in New Zealand: "We are only a poor and ignorant little meeting here, but what the Lord wants is our hearts, not our heads." Well, He wants both, but He wants our hearts first and most. The loving heart soon learns the likes and dislikes of the loved One. The Christ would fain domicile and dominate in our hearts, that we may know His love. He does not want to come in as a *boarder*. We take in a boarder

## INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.

for what we get out of him. That will not do for Jesus. He does not want to be received even as *a visitor*. We always put on an appearance more or less before a guest, and the greater the guest, the better we desire to appear. The Lord does not like anything put on. He does not want us to bring forth unleavened bread, like Lot, for the occasion, but to let Him take charge of us so that it shall be the staple food of the house. He wants to be *at home* with us, beloved, to make our hearts His home, to be abidingly supreme in our affections. Oh! shall we not "Swing the heart's door widely open," as we sometimes sing, that He may sway our entire moral being?

Thus we shall become established—"rooted" like a tree, "founded" like a building, in love. Intelligence, too, follows—we apprehend. Aye, and it is "with all saints." That means that the heart in which the Christ is enthroned takes in every one which He takes in. And further,

## INTIMACY WITH CHRIST

we "know," we consciously, experimentally "know" the love of "the Christ," that love with which He is going to fill all things by-and-by. Thus, and thus only, can we be filled with all the fulness of God, and thus only can we be *satisfied*. If we are filled, we must be satisfied.

A young convert once said when asked by his former associates to go to a place of amusement: "I've got *no blanks*." It is blessed to have no blanks! Are we really satisfied? How seldom we are. Do we ever go to God though we may want nothing? We often go when we want something, and quite right too, but it is better to be drawn by *love* than driven by *need*! We used to hear, years ago, of a little girl who worried her father as he was engaged in his study by continually knocking and asking for something, till at last he said: "Now go away, dearie, father is so busy; do not come again till I call you." The little thing went, but presently she came back on tip-toe. Then,

after a pause, she gave a timid knock. "What is it now, child, what do you want?" said the father. What was the reply? "Nothing, father—only you." Ah! that touched the father's heart, and sweeping his papers aside, he took his little one to his heart and loved her. Oh! how grateful it is to the Father when we go to Him simply to enjoy His presence and love, simply for the sake of His company, simply to tell Him how precious Jesus is to us, and how much we love Him, and how worthy He is to be enshrined in our affections and in the affections of the Father.

“ Centre of the Father's counsels,  
He for whom all things were made ;  
Object of the Father's pleasure,  
Who the Father's name displayed.”

How supremely blessed it is to feel the import of this. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him"—that is it! What more can we want? Nothing but more of His love. But to enjoy

## INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.

the Father's love we must give the "Son of his love," the "Son of the Father," the heavenly Isaac, the place He wants in our hearts. Then are we filled with (or unto) all the fulness of God, and we want nothing more; we are satisfied, we are like Naphtali: "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord." May it be so.

S. J. B. C.

*Ilford, Essex.*

.

---

---

London : G. Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square, E.C.