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Helps for Young Christians.

No. 30.

What Christ is to the  
Believer,  
and  
What the Believer is  
to Christ.

ERNEST BARKER.

AUTHOR "Wheels within Wheels."

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# “What Christ is to the Believer, and What the Believer is to Christ.”

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## PART I.

What is Christ to the Believer? In a word  
He is

**EVERYTHING.**

There is a charm, a glory, a magnetism attached to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ which is beyond the power of human expression. No artist's brush, no writer's skill, no preacher's eloquence can adequately convey all that He is.

Let us, first of all, remind ourselves of our own **nothingness**. One of the most stinging and cutting statements in the Pauline Epistles occurs in Gal. 6. 3. “If a man think himself to be **something**, when he is **nothing**, he deceiveth himself.” By nature we were devoid of true wisdom, divinely-required **righteousness**, and genuine **holiness**. Furthermore, we were so poverty-stricken and helpless that we were unable either to purchase or to work out our own **redemption**.

Now, because we failed in all these divine essentials, God graciously provided them for us **IN CHRIST**. And herein lies the grandeur and significance of the words “But of Him are ye in Christ



Jesus, Who of God is made unto us **WISDOM**, and **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and **SANCTIFICATION**, and **REDEMPTION**” (1 Cor. 1. 30). These four expressions cover the whole of our need **God-ward** throughout our spiritual history from the time we originally trusted the Saviour until the happy moment when we shall find ourselves at home in glory. As we contemplate the richness and fulness of this provision, we increasingly realise that to the believer Christ is everything.

When the Apostle Peter penned his first letter, the believers to whom he wrote had suffered untold persecution for Christ’s sake. This can be verified by an examination of the epistle, noticing the many passages in which the writer refers to the subject of persecution. But those very sufferings had made Christ more real to them than ever before, so much so that Peter could say: “Unto you therefore which believe, He is **THE PRECIOUSNESS**.” In the authorised version the word “precious” is used as an adjective, but when it is read (as it should be read) in the form of a noun, “**The preciousness**,” a tremendous force is added to the passage.

It is always a happy sign when we are able to rise above the gifts to the **Giver**. For instance, it is a great thing to know that we have **life**—it is a greater thing to know that **Christ is our Life**. It is wonderful to know that “we have peace with God”—it is more wonderful to know that **Christ Himself is our Peace**. It is grand to realise that we possess a hope which is “sure and stedfast”—it is infinitely grander to realise that **Christ is in us the hope of Glory**. In other words, His love, His promises, His gifts are **precious**, but He Himself is “**THE PRECIOUSNESS**.”



In John 9. 16 we read : “ And there was a division among them.” There ever has been, and the division concerning Him is as pronounced to-day as when the blind man received his sight. To many Christ is **nothing** ; whilst to others He is an object of deadly hatred. Some think that He was a good man ; one who propounded great principles ; performed notable miracles ; lived an exemplary life, and ultimately died a martyr’s death ; but who was not what he claimed to be—the Son of God and God the Son. To others He is **ALL THAT HE CLAIMED TO BE**—and the more they know Him the more intensely real He becomes.

A subtle danger among Christians is that of raising national and other distinctions between themselves and their fellow believers. In Col. 3. 11, Paul shews how such an attitude is entirely contrary to God’s will. He mentions eight different classes, which he divides into four pairs. The first pair forms the **national** distinction—Jew and Greek. The second pair forms the **ceremonial** distinction—circumcision and uncircumcision. The third pair forms the distinction **among the lowest classes**—Barbarian and Scythian. The fourth and last pair forms the **social** distinction—bond and free. In Christ all these distinctions disappear, as the Apostle says : “ **CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL.**” This does not mean that we are to have fellowship with those things in the professing Christian churches which are directly opposed to the teaching of Scripture. It means rather that we must not look down upon a fellow-believer because he happens to be on what we think is a slightly lower level than ourselves. If only we could realise that Christ is **everything** to us, we should constantly be seeking to see more of Christ in each other.



We may be materially assisted in our study of "What Christ is to the Believer" if we endeavour to discover what He was to the Apostle Paul. To ascertain this our minds almost instinctively travel to Philippians, Chapter 3, where we have some of the noblest and grandest statements ever made by God's honoured servant.

Take, for example, this magnificent utterance—"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (v. 7). How wonderfully real Christ must have been to His imprisoned Apostle! In the adjoining verses Paul had been enumerating some of those natural advantages which were his by reason of his birth and early training, but as he thinks of these short-lived privileges he writes them off as—LOSS.

He then goes a step further, and says . "I count ALL things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (v. 8). Not merely his natural advantages, but all other things of an earthly character were written off as—LOSS. Why? Because the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, was, in his estimation, infinitely superior to all else.

Then in the same verse he uses words which I am bold to suggest not one of my readers could say truly (and I am perfectly sure the writer could not)—"FOR WHOM I HAVE SUFFERED THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS" Could there be any evidence more overwhelming than this, shewing how thoroughly and transcendently real Christ was to the great Apostle? Every other motive; every other ambition; every other pleasure faded into insignificance in the light of this soul-absorbing theme—THE PERSON OF CHRIST; It was HE who filled the apostle's thoughts, moulded his life, directed his service, and beautified his utterances.



There was a period in our Lord's ministry when many of His professed followers "went back and walked no more with Him." He then turned to the twelve with the searching question "Will ye also go away?" Peter's answer was very significant, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" In other words Peter had come to the conclusion that whoever he could dispense with, he could **not** dispense with **HIM**.

Surely it is high time that we arrived at the same conclusion. To whom can we go? Who else can satisfy our spiritual craving? Who else can fill our lives with joy and usefulness? To put the proposition in Old Testament language, "Whom have I in heaven but **THEE**? and there is none on earth that I desire beside **THEE**."

We said at first that, to the believer, Christ is **EVERYTHING**, and this is perfectly true, and yet there is another sense in which Christ is to us just

#### WHAT WE MAKE HIM;

that is, of course, **experimentally**. If we make **little** of Him, He will become correspondingly little to us. If we make **much** of Him, He will become correspondingly real to us. If we make **everything** of Him, He will become everything to us.

One of the grandest utterances of John the Baptist is recorded in John 3. 30—"He must **increase**, but I must **decrease**," which means—Let Him become greater and greater; let me become less and less. Let Him fill all heaven; let me fill a little space, if thereby God be glorified. Let Him be **everything**—let me be **nothing**.



## PART II.

What is the Believer to Christ ? The answer is the same

## EVERYTHING,

and this for many reasons, one of the most potent of which is suggested by the greatly misunderstood and misapplied text in Matt. 13. 45 and 46—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls : who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Now, this does not, **cannot** mean that the sinner sells everything to secure Christ, because, in the first place, **the sinner has nothing of any value to sell**, and, in the second place, **Christ cannot be purchased**.

The passage conveys the wondrous fact that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her (Eph. 5. 25). Pearls are not found on the surface, but underneath, and the Lord Jesus descended to the deepest depths of Calvary's sorrows in order to secure that pearl. Yes, "He went and sold **all that He had.**" Whatever the journey entailed, He undertook it ; whatever the cost was, He paid it. "None of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed," but now, thank God ten thousand times, **THE PEARL IS HIS**—purchased at the awful cost of His precious blood.

### HOW PRECIOUS MUST THAT PEARL BE TO HIM !

It is interesting to trace the various titles by which believers are called in the New Testament. We need to examine only two of them in order to see further evidences of the nearness of our relationship to Christ. Here is the first :—"For which cause He is not ashamed to call them



## BRETHREN."

(Heb. 2. 11). What 'astounding' grace; what remarkable condescension is displayed here! How often are we ashamed to own Him; how frequently we hide our light under a bushel, and yet, notwithstanding our shortcomings, He is not ashamed to call us **brethren**.

Let me here guard my reader against the error into which so many Christians fall when they refer to the Lord Jesus as their "elder brother." **NOWHERE IN SCRIPTURE IS PERMISSION GIVEN FOR SUCH FAMILIARITY**, and whenever such language is adopted it tends to shew how shallow and how poorly-versed in the Word of Truth is he who accustoms himself to so irreverent a term. Said He to His disciples: "Ye call Me **Master and Lord**: and ye say well, for so I am."

The other title is one of great endearment, viz.:—

## "HIS OWN"

(John 13. 1), which implies that **WE ARE THE MOST VALUABLE POSSESSION HE HAS ON EARTH**. All His thoughts and His purposes, as well as His affections, are centred in us. We are His by conquest; His by purchase; His because we have been given to Him by the Father. Thus in every way we are **HIS OWN**. We can, therefore, count on Him to comfort us in sorrow; support us in illness; strengthen us in trial; and assist us in every emergency.

There is one chapter (John 17) in which we read no less than seven times that we are the Father's love-gift to the Son, and in verse 9 we hear the Lord Jesus saying: "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given



Me; for they are Thine.” Why did He not pray for the world? Because He prayed for the world on the cross—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He is now interceding for HIS OWN—for you, beloved reader, and for me.

If anyone challenges this statement and contends that the Lord was then referring to His disciples, verse 20 will quickly terminate all controversy:—  
 “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.”  
 How grand it is to realise that the Lord Jesus was then thinking of us and praying for us, and surely this was but a pre-figuring of His present unfinished work as Intercessor for all His own at the right-hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.  
 HOW EXCEEDINGLY PRECIOUS WE MUST BE TO HIM.

The value which Christ places upon each of His saints may be further appreciated when we remember that every believer is a member of His body, i.e., His church. There are many members attached to our physical body, and each member has its peculiar value. In fact, so far as the completeness of the physical body is concerned each member is of equal value, for the simple reason that if one part were missing, the body would be incomplete. Now, Christ and His saints form one complete whole—AND EACH MEMBER IS EQUALLY VALUABLE TO HIM.

We all understand that Christ is our fulness, and yet in Eph. 1. 23, we are informed of the amazing fact that we are His fulness. Likewise we can easily grasp the truth that Christ is our inheritance, and yet in the same chapter, v. 18, we are actually told that we are His inheritance. The more we endeavour



to grip these mighty truths, and allow them to grip us, the more easily we shall understand how **extraordinarily precious** we are to Christ.

But of all the Scriptural evidences of the priceless value the Lord Jesus places upon His saints, the most overwhelming are those which have to do with the future. It is **absolutely impossible** for us to conceive the joys and glories that await HIS OWN. Paul earnestly desired to apprehend that for which he had been apprehended by Christ Jesus (Phil. 3. 12 and 13). That is to say, he wanted to **grasp** the purpose for which Christ had grasped him. Was he able to do so? NO. He had to confess, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended." An interesting question arises here:—Why had Christ laid hold of His Apostle? The answer is:—for many reasons, the highest, greatest, and grandest of which was that Paul might enjoy **ETERNAL ASSOCIATION WITH HIM**.

We have only to read the gospels carefully to see how frequently the Lord Jesus referred to the glories of the future, and we do well to remember that throughout His earthly ministry He was able to look forward to **the other side of the cross** and anticipate the period when **all** His redeemed ones would be with Him in the glory without a cloud between.

Surely this is what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews unfolds when he says in Ch. 12. 2: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame." Undoubtedly the joy of fulfilling His Father's will was included in that glorious passage, but He also knew that by fulfilling that will He would eventually "see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied."

Now shall we recall a few of our Lord's prominent references to the eternal future. In John 12. 26, we have one of the greatest incentives to effective



service anywhere to be found in Scripture—"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and **WHERE I AM THERE SHALL ALSO MY SERVANT BE.**" If our hearts beat true to Him we shall esteem this as the crowning reward—the Master and the Servant sharing eternal glory together. Even then we shall not be idle. Our service for Him will be continued according to the delightful words of Rev. 22. 3, "And His servants shall serve Him," though of course, that service will be **perfect** without any admixture of selfish interests. But the great thing to bear in mind is that He longs to have us **WHERE HE IS.**

A further reference to the future is seen in the familiar opening verses of John 14. The Lord was about to leave His disciples, and notwithstanding this He said to them: "Let not your heart be troubled." The wonderment of these words is enhanced when we remember that they were spoken **in full view of the cross.** He Who had been their best friend; Who had helped them in their difficulties, and to Whom they had resorted for counsel and support was on the eve of His return journey to heaven. And yet He told them **not to worry.** Why? Because at a future date **HE WOULD COME FOR THEM IN PERSON.** Meanwhile He was going to prepare a place for them—and for us. Do we not see here a further proof of the value He places upon each believer? He has been absent now about two thousand years, and during this long period He has been "getting the home ready" for all **HIS OWN.**

Following this is the definite promise: "I will come again." As surely as He came once, so surely will He come **the second time,** and, moreover, He is coming **HIMSELF.** He does not intend sending an angel or any other representative. We are so



inexpressibly dear to Him that when we hear the three-fold summons of 1 Thess. 4. 16, we shall all be caught away to meet Him in the air.

But what was the great object which the Lord Jesus had in mind when He so definitely promised to return ? Here it is in His own words :—“ **AND RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF.**” This is the desire upon which He set His heart in the past eternal ages. Just as our hope is centred in Him, so His hope is centred in us. The two short words “with Christ” convey the secret of heaven’s glory. His three resurrection titles “The Firstborn,” “The Firstfruits,” and “The Forerunner” clearly indicate the closeness of our association with Him.

WHAT IS THE BELIEVER TO CHRIST ?

WHAT VALUE DOES HE PLACE UPON US ?

—Who can estimate this but He Himself ? The Good Shepherd thinks so highly of His sheep that He cannot rest until He sees them all in His presence when there shall be **-ONE FLOCK AND ONE SHEPHERD.**

Many times we read in the fourth gospel that the Lord Jesus came, **not** to do His own will, but the Father’s Who sent Him. Especially was this emphasised in the Garden of Gethsemane, when, under the shadow of the cross, He said : “Not My will, but Thine be done.” But there was one definite occasion when He did express the desire for the fulfilment of His own will, and the record is in John 17. 24—“Father, I **WILL** that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me, **WHERE I AM**, that they may behold My glory.”

How grand it is to observe that this intense longing of the blessed Lord is so intimately connected with **HIS OWN** ! Every other thought; every other purpose; every other anticipation was subservient to this tremendous yearning of His heart,



and He alone can appreciate the fulness of joy which will then be the portion of all who belong to Him.

No human eye has ever seen what we shall see when we are in his presence. No human ear has ever heard the songs of praise and thanksgiving which shall sound and resound throughout heaven's courts. No human heart has ever faintly conceived those wonders of divine grace with which the saints of God will be occupied throughout eternity.

In that scene of unspeakable and unthought of blessedness, we shall neither hunger nor thirst. We shall have no need of the sun (natural light), nor of the moon (reflected light), nor of the candle (artificial light). The curse will be a thing of the past; the last tear shall have been wiped away; sorrow, sighing, and pain will be no more. Death (the most awful thing in the world) will be swallowed up and lost sight of in victory; every saint will be perfected; all anxiety, misunderstanding, unpleasantness, jealousy, backbiting will be for ever exterminated. All sin and defilement will be finally and eternally vanquished; and, best of all, **WE SHALL SEE HIS FACE**; we shall be transformed into His glorious likeness; His precious name shall be engraved on our foreheads; we shall know Him as completely as He knows us (1 Cor. 13. 12); everlasting joy shall be upon our heads, and, notwithstanding this, we shall obtain joy and gladness. It will be joy upon joy; song upon song; satisfaction upon satisfaction, ever abounding as the eternal ages roll by.

**THEN we shall understand as never before WHAT CHRIST IS TO THE BELIEVER, AND WHAT THE BELIEVER IS TO CHRIST.**

**ERNEST BARKER.**



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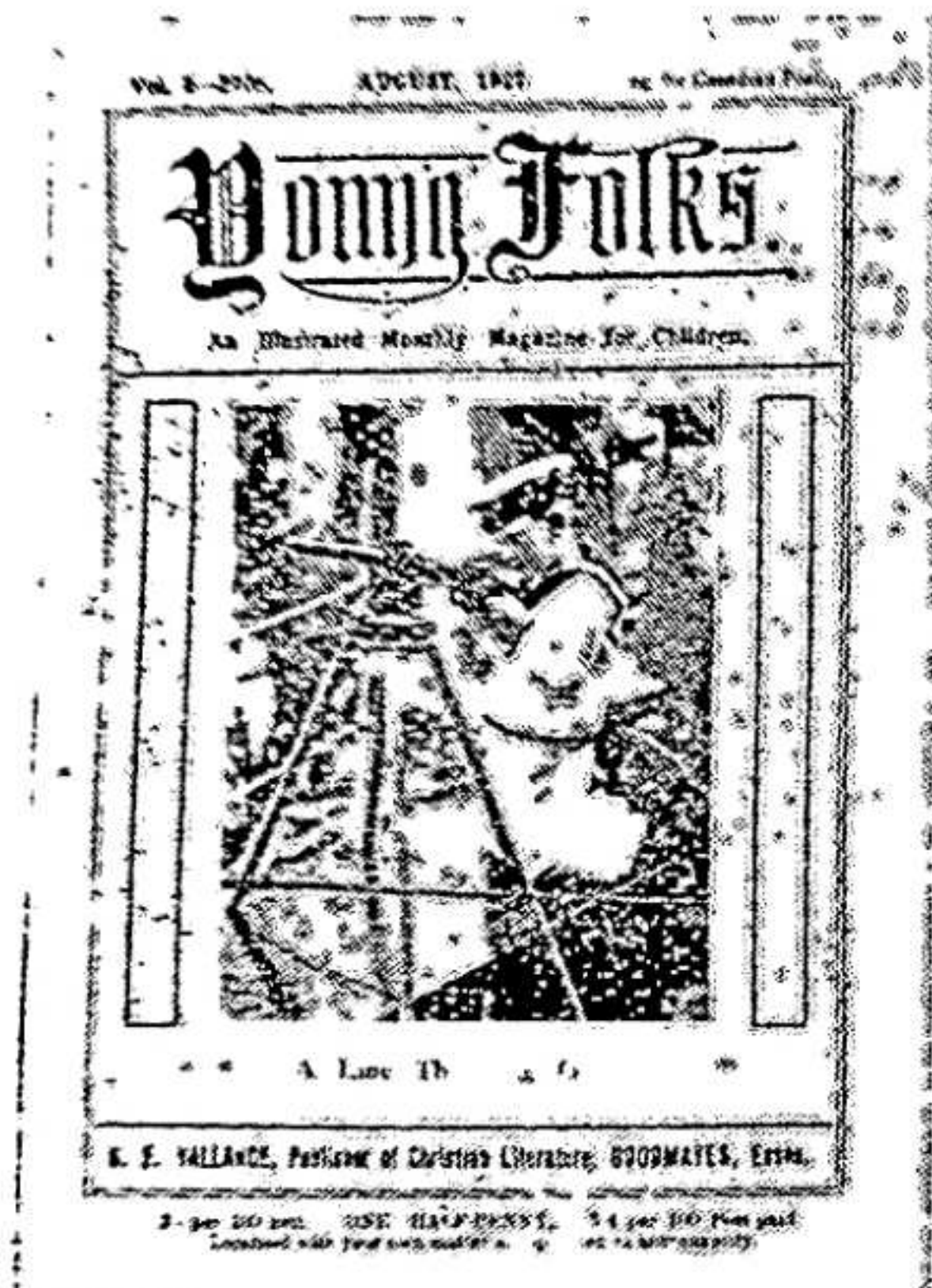
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