

Articles by George Pinches

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Contemplation of Self or of Christ

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In his natural state man has no concern regarding either his moral standing or his manner of living as a responsible creature before God, but when his conscience is awakened by the Word of God, he is convicted of the emptiness and aimlessness of his life; he is troubled because of his sins against and his responsibility to God. It may be that under the power of that conviction eventually, like the bitten Israelite who looked to the serpent of brass on the pole, he will turn to the Son of Man, the Lamb of God on the Cross, and receive through Him pardon, peace, and eternal life.

Immediately with this experience he starts on a new life, for heaven seems already to have begun in his soul. Nevertheless, very soon he finds that his old nature, that he thought was laid low in death, is very active. As his knowledge is increased through the reading of the Word of God, he finds himself continually in thought, word and deed transgressing the standards of that knowledge. In the sadness that results from this feeling of failure, he is not helped by the discovery that most of those who profess to accept the testimony of God are very much in the same condition, and that some of them have settled down to a low contradictory manner of life, a life little better than that of normal Christianity.

Not being satisfied the young Christian turns to a teacher of the law for advice. To him he complains that when he would do good, evil is present with him, and

that although inwardly he delights in the law of God, he finds within his heart an adverse power, and that the result of such a life, so far below the true standard, has robbed him of his early joy in the Lord. He also admits that his increased knowledge of what is right seems a curse rather than a blessing because it appears to be divorced from the power necessary to reach its standards. The teacher to whom he has gone can give him no help, for all he can do is to insist upon the need to measure up to the standard of knowledge and to threaten the displeasure of God in the event of failure.

As he ponders these things, he begins to review the way by which he was led to believe in Christ. A new understanding of that experience shows him that its blessing had come to him by turning his gaze from himself and his doings to the up-lifted Saviour, an object external to himself, even Christ crucified. Self-contemplation has no part in this for if it had then would the sufficiency of Christ been limited. No, Christ in all the worth of His person, and in all the value of His work must avail for the believer. Reflecting upon these things the Christian realizes that the mirror into which he looks is the Word of God, every part of which bears witness to Christ. His life as manifested in the Gospels and His death as revealed throughout the New Testament.

As therefore we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, let us walk in Him (Col. 2:6), and as we think of the future, let us remember His Word that we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). Let us set our hope on Christ and purify ourselves even as He is pure. What a glorious moment when we shall see Him and be like Him forever!

With such a consciousness of weakness and failure, the believer decides to make Christ the object of his heart, to change from self-contemplation to the contemplation of Christ. The more Christ fills the mind and the heart the less is the saint troubled with thoughts concerning himself. His life becomes calm, there is less conflict, there is an absence of effort, and there is a growing up into Christ in all things. He now increasingly loves the Lord and all who are His. His likes and dislikes with prejudices vanish, his sympathies are enlarged, his judgment more correct, and he begins to live on earth the life suitable to his heavenly calling. Soon he prays the prayer that became the habit of an-other's life, "May I be all eyes to see, all ears to hear, all heart to love, all mouth to praise the Lord and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now in the enjoyment of true satisfaction and blessing he is led to see, through the Word of God, how his life has been changed; he discovers that Christ is not only the object of his gaze, but that Christ is the glorious subject in his heart, living there in the power of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it now becomes a pleasure to yield to the Spirit Who brings forth fruit in his life (Gal. 5:22), and Who reproduces the life of Christ in his mortal body. Moreover, he sees, as a believer, that he has been crucified with Christ, and that he no longer lives unto self, but unto Christ. He is able to say with the Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

The secret of joyful successful Christian living, all must learn, results from a simple faith that is fixed upon the

Lord Jesus and from the influence of the Spirit of Christ within creating a state that corresponds to His own life. The Lord has expressed this in His own language, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (John 15:7-8).