

Introduction: Our recent studies in Philippians 2 highlight this benefit: because Christ embraced our humanity so fully, even to the point of taking our humanity and enduring the depths of our guilt and sin, there is now, for every believer, a huge repository of godly, holy humanity which Christ by His Spirit can work into our lives in union with Him by faith. We delve into the benefits from Christ's humanity in this week's notes.

Mon/Tues: Read Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 2:12-13.

The whole of our Lord's substitution of Himself in our place amounts to this: in the womb of the Virgin Mary, He took our flesh and our character. As a young boy when He wandered about in Nazareth He took our flesh and wore it and received all that came upon the flesh of man, and even as a little boy, even as a boy at the age of twelve, He was continually pushing back the frontiers of temptation and sin out of His life.

He took this human flesh of ours and all its frailty, He took it through His teenage years, He took it through His youth, He took it through His early manhood into His mature life. He hid His glory within our human nature as though for all the world He were a sinner Himself, because for our sakes He was utterly determined that this human nature that He took in the womb of the Virgin Mary should be sanctified and made new.

Sinclair Ferguson, from a sermon on Gal 2:20

Proceeds from this reality:

In terms of justification, there is the awesome exchange whereby Christ dies our accursed death on the Cross, having learned obedience in our nature as our Substitute and High Priest. Now so that we are spared and clothed *with His* righteousness! (Compare Hebrews 5:7-10)

In terms of sanctification, Christ's saving work changes us *inwardly* by changing our humanity from the inside out. As Paul triumphantly declares, "it is God who works in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

The result is a *transformation*. Christ is able *through the inward, progressive work of sanctification*, to transform our humanity into His sanctified human nature.

We have already said that Christ took our place outside of our lives. And now we are going to say that Christ takes His place within our lives. He took our place quite irrespective of us; before any of us here were ever born, Christ took our place on the Cross, and during His whole incarnation. But having done that two thousand years ago, He must also take His place *in* our lives now.

And when He comes to us by His Holy Spirit to do this very thing, He comes, as it were, still wearing His human nature. He comes clothed in the garments of His incarnation. He comes with it all summed up in His human nature and in His life; and it is *that* Christ Who comes into our lives when we are converted, none other, none smaller, none different, but that Christ...

It is Christ, from His conception to His coming, again Who by His Spirit is come into our lives, into our hearts bringing with Him His whole human life and descending into our being, so that having taken our place in *His* life He may take His place in *our* lives.

Dr. Ferguson on Gal 2:20

Let us acknowledge both the outward benefits of the Cross, such as *justification*, and the inward transformation called sanctification.

We must also know something else, and that is that there is a possibility with Christ in our lives that our past can be remade, and His past can be substituted for our past, and the character He bore can in all its lineaments be wrought into our present character now. Now this means simply put that when Christ comes into our lives, He deals, not only with our guilt, but with our nature. But He is able to deal with our nature because He took our human nature, because He lived with our nature, because He got right under it in all its frailty, His past can be worked into our past. The Potter remakes the vessel, but it is with the clay of Christ that that vessel is remade.

Sinclair Ferguson

Meditate and Pray: Because “it is no longer we who live” (Galatians 2:20), we can now see Christ reclaim the most scarring events of our lives and substitute His perfect character into our experiences of fallenness from our own sin and from our painful wounds at others’ hands? It makes salvation so much fuller when we realize that the very salvation which Christ worked *for us* He can now work *in us*, changing us into His image as He sanctifies our marred humanity with His perfect human character, weaving into us a new past, as well as a new future!

Since Christ wore our nature through every kind of character-developing trial, we believe that there is ...

... such a nature, such a character as can be worked into our present life, so that gradually, of course not fully in this life, but fully in the next, Christ's infancy and childhood and adulthood – all the character He bore - may be wrought by the Holy Spirit into your present life now.

Sinclair Ferguson

I conclude with hymn # 707 in the red Trinity, that well expresses the wonder of having (by the Spirit) Christ’s character *within us* as well as Christ’s Cross *over us*. (Sing to tune Hyfrydol, # 196):

1 Jesus, I my cross have taken,
all to leave, and follow thee;
destitute, despised, forsaken,
thou from hence my all shalt be.
Perish ev'ry fond ambition,
all I've sought or hoped or known;
yet how rich is my condition,
God and heav'n are still my own.

2 Let the world despise and leave me,
they have left my Savior too;
human hearts and looks deceive me;
thou art not, like man, untrue;
and, while thou shalt smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
foes may hate and friends may shun me;
show thy face, and all is bright.

4 Take, my soul, thy full salvation,
 rise o'er sin and fear and care;
 joy to find in ev'ry station
 something still to do or bear
Think what Spirit dwells within thee,
 what a Father's smile is thine,
 what a Savior died to win thee:
 child of heav'n, shouldst thou repine?

5 Hasten on from grace to glory,
 armed by faith, and winged by prayer;
 heav'n's eternal day's before thee,
 God's own hand shall guide thee there.
 Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
 swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;
 hope soon change to glad fruition,
 faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

Weds/Thurs: Read Philippians 2:12-18 and 1 John 1:8-2:2. Besides His power to *remake us in His own image*, working into our lives all the virtues of His human nature (in our *sanctification*), there is also the joy of the daily purifying of our consciences in Jesus' name. Praise God for the wonder of our *justification* by Christ's blood each time we seek forgiveness.

How important it is to ask the Lord to constantly maintain the fresh fountain of His blood – and to protect us from protracted times of silence, when immediate and honest confession is urgently required. Don't listen to the devil when he discourages you from keeping short accounts! Don't substitute a spirit of complaining and grumbling (Philippians 2:14) for the joy of being very verbal with God about our sin. Though you sinned again, after recently finding forgiveness *in the commission of the very same sin ...* do not seek to salve your own wounded conscience by vain hopes of being a better person in your own strength. Come as you are to Christ:

I ought to go to Christ for the forgiveness of each sin. In washing my body, I go over every spot, and wash it out. Should I be less careful in washing my soul? I ought to see the stripe that was made on the back of Jesus by each of my sins ... I ought to see that in Christ's blood-shedding there is an infinite over-payment for all my sins. Although Christ did not suffer more than infinite justice demanded, yet He could not suffer at all without laying down an infinite ransom.
 Robert Murray McCheyne

Daily resort to Christ and His Cross reminds of the *depth* of Christ's love for us in His willingness to become obedient even to death for our sins. It is a deep joy in fresh cleansing and daily renewal as we walk in fellowship with Jesus. It is not a surprise, then, that one main replacement for the spirit of grumbling and complaining (Philippians 2:14), is a deep joy in Christ – no matter what the current suffering might be. Even if poured out as a drink offering, Paul wants the Philippians to rejoice with him in Christ's grace! (Philippians 2:17-18)

Meditate and Pray: How joyful our worship should be, knowing that we can present ourselves as “living sacrifices” (Philippians 2:17-18) because of the daily reality of finding fresh forgiveness of our sins!

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Acts 2:32-33; Philippians 2:9-13 & Philippians 1:27. Christ's *presence with and in us* is a pledge not only that we are *justified* by Christ's substitutionary work, but that our *sanctification* is also guaranteed since this same Christ who worked outside of us in history (accomplishing the work of the Cross *for us*) also *works in us*, by His Spirit applying the fruit of His risen humanity in our inner being. What peace this gave the Apostle and should give to us.

For example, why is Paul confident that "not only when he is present but when he is absent" Christ's work in the Philippians will continue? (Philippians 1:27 & 2:12) Because the same Jesus who was exalted in Philippians 2:9-11 has poured out His Spirit onto and into His church. By the Spirit of the Ascended Jesus, the work which God began in the Philippians will be carried out! Because Jesus is not *physically with us* but is at God's right hand, He can *spiritually pour out His presence by His Spirit into our hearts, wills and minds* – a far more effective way of working in our lives than He could accomplish even when He was on earth!

This is an emphasis that runs through the post-Easter appearances of Jesus. The reason He suddenly appears and then just as suddenly disappears is so that the church might learn to trust His presence with them by His Spirit *when they cannot see Him or enjoy His physical presence*.

Yes, there will come a day when we shall behold Christ in glory – and we shall be transformed physically as well as spiritually, when in our new resurrection bodies "we see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1). But Christ is always with His church, and working in us, His people, even when Apostles or great teachers are physically absent!

Meditate and Pray: What comfort the unseen presence of the risen Lord Jesus must have brought to Paul as he lay in prison, unable to go and see his beloved Philippians. He knew that Jesus would draw near even when he the great Apostle could not. Sing about the rich comfort of this doctrine that Christ has promised His church, in Matthew 28:20: "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."

No distant Lord have I,
Loving afar to be;
Made flesh for me, He cannot rest
Until He rests in me.

Brother in joy and pain,
Bone of my bone was He;
Now—intimacy closer still,
He dwells Himself in me.

I need not journey far

This dearest Friend to see;
Companionship is always mine;
He makes His home with me.

I envy not the twelve,
Nearer to me is He;
The life He once lived here on earth
He lives again in me.

Ascended now to God,
My witness there to be,
His witness here am I, because
His Spirit dwells in me.

O glorious Son of God,
Incarnate Deity,
I shall forever be with Thee
Because Thou art with me.

Maltbie Babcock, (1858-1901)

