

The All-Encompassing Christ

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger ...*

St. Patrick (387-461)

These words are the ending phrases of what is called “The Hymn of St. Patrick.” The hymn, which is actually a prayer, begins with this affirmation, “I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity, by invocation of the same, the Three in One and the One in Three.” Anyone who reads the rest of this hymn will come to realize that Patrick knew the triune God in a fullness that the Bible indicates as God’s will for every Biblical Christian. The Apostle Paul prayed for this fullness for the saints of God:

For this reason, on bended knee I beseech the Father, from whom the whole family in Heaven and on earth derives its name, to grant you – in accordance with the wealth of His glorious perfections – to be strengthened by His Spirit with power penetrating to your inmost being. I pray that Christ may make His home in your hearts through your faith; so that having your roots deep and your foundations strong, in love, you may become mighty to grasp the idea, as it is grasped by all God’s people, of the breadth and length, the height and depth – yes, to attain to a knowledge of the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, so that you may be made complete in accordance with God’s own standard of completeness. Now to Him who, in exercise of His power that is at work within us, is able to do infinitely beyond all our highest prayers or thoughts – to Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, world without end! Amen (Ephesians 3:14-21, Weymouth translation).

I recently read a short commentary by David Adam, vicar of Holy Island, Lindisfarne, expositing the faith that St. Patrick had in the saving power of Christ and in His abiding presence.”¹ In this short essay, I would like to unfold and expand upon Adam’s insights.

Christ be with me

Christ commissioned His original disciples and, by inference, all the followers of Christ with this command and promise:

¹ David Adam, *The Edge of Glory: Prayers in the Celtic Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1985), pp. 100-104.

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Jesus however came near and said to them, “All power in Heaven and over the earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations; baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and teach them to obey every command which I have given you. And remember, I am with you always, day by day, until the Close of the Age” (Matthew 28:18-19, Weymouth translation).

The command: *Disciple nations*. The promise: My personal presence shall be with you every minute, indeed, every second, of every hour. *Christ be with me* ... Patrick is invoking or “calling this promise” to become a daily reality in his life as he sought, during the 5th century AD, to bring the pagan Celts to a saving knowledge of God in Christ. God has called every Biblical Christian in every generation to be a part of this nation-discipling process. Some obey this command and literally go to the “uttermost” part of the earth (as Patrick did). Others invoke God’s will and pray, in agreement with the prayer of the Anointed, Son of God: “Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession” (Psalm 2:8, NKJV, cf. John 14:14). As a consequence of the enthronement of Christ, He sends His followers, empowered by His ascension gift of the Holy Spirit, to conquer the nations *that He has purchased on the Cross*. What Christ has purchased, His Spirit-empowered followers make a reality by their obedience of faith (Romans 1:5; 15:16).

All Biblical Christians are called to obey the Biblical commission of Gospel empowered nation-transformation. As we have mentioned, some, as “front-line soldiers” of the Cross, literally “pack their bags” and cross cultural barriers. Others, as generals and planners of the Cross, “work the Scriptures” and seek to discern God’s patterns and ways in which nations can be blessed. To fulfill their respective callings, these “soldiers and generals” need a support base in terms of prayer and finances. All Biblical Christians pray that God’s name be honored and His kingdom advance in all the earth (Matthew 6:10-11) and some Biblical Christians have been especially gifted of God to generate the necessary finances to support these kingdom thrusts. God gives some the power to generate wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18) for the purpose of blessing nations thereby (Psalm 67).

No matter what God has called you to do individually, we all need to appropriate and seek after the blessed awareness of the reality of the personal presence of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 13:14). It is only God’s presence of power that can sustain and strengthen us in our callings under God in Christ. The triune God, the One in Three and the Three in One, freely blesses us so that we may be endued with power in order that we might become prosperous, wholesome, and faithful in our innermost being, in our mind, in our emotions, in our body, and in everything that is ours and in everything that we touch.

As Patrick invoked, *Christ be with me* today.

Christ within me

According to Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary, a pilgrimage is:

“a long journey, particularly a journey to some place deemed sacred and venerable, in order to pay devotion to the relics of some deceased saint. Thus in the middle ages, kings, princes, bishops and others made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, in pious devotion to the Savior.”

A pilgrim is one who makes such a journey. Pilgrims are seekers. In the history of Christendom, the object sought has often been a façade of reality. The New Testament radiates with the truth that there are no longer any sacred places or objects (John 4:21-24). The prophet Amos states that pilgrimages are a sign of a deeper problem:

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. And they shall wander from sea to sea,

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and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12, NKJV).

God commands His people to “seek His face” (Psalm 27:8, NKJV). The Apostle Paul told the pagan philosophers of Greece:

GOD who made the universe and everything in it – He, being Lord of Heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries built by men. Nor is He ministered to by human hands, as though He needed anything – but He Himself gives to all men life and breath and all things. He caused to spring from one forefather people of every race, for them to live on the whole surface of the earth, and marked out for them an appointed span of life and the boundaries of their homes; that they might seek God, if perhaps they could grope for Him and find Him. Yes, though He is not far from any one of us. For it is in closest union with Him that we live and move and have our being ... (Acts 17:24-28, Weymouth translation).

The truth reality is that the God who has redeemed us in Christ also *lives in us*. The triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – dwells in us (study carefully John 14-16). The phrase “in Christ” is ubiquitous in the New Testament. We are “in Christ” not just as some propositional or positional truth; we are truly in Christ as relational truth. In grace, the Triune God lives in us and we live in God. It is in this union with Him, as Richard Weymouth translates Acts 17:28, that we *truly* live, move, and exist.

As we learn to still our surging waters of fleshly mind and emotion and “call this promise,” the floodtide will recede and we will discover that He “is there” (Ezekiel 48:35) working in us and through us for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13-14).

As Patrick invoked, *Christ within me* today.

Christ behind me

As we ponder on our past thoughts and actions, we often condemn ourselves. I’m not just talking about our past before we became Christians *but also our past as Christians*. How many times have we asked ourselves, “How could I have done this! I should have known better ... what a fool I am ... what a failure!” Many times our actions (or non-actions) have not only hurt ourselves, but we have hurt others (even close loved ones). Sometimes our failures, when viewed by non-Christians (and sometimes by “graceless” Christians), have been detrimental to the immediate cause of Christ and His kingdom.

What do we do with this unwelcome and oftentimes shameful weight and baggage? We must first be brutally honest with ourselves and take full responsibility for our *sins* (not just our “mistakes”). Ponder carefully these words written by the beloved Apostle John:

That which was from the beginning, which we have listened to, which we have seen with our own eyes, and our own hands have handled concerning the Word of Life – the Life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and we declare unto you the Life of the Ages which was with the Father and was manifested to us – that which we have seen and listened to we now announce to you also, in order that you also may have fellowship in it with us, and this fellowship with us is fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And we write these things in order that our joy may be made complete. This is the Message which we have heard from the Lord Jesus and now deliver to you – God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness. If, while we are living in darkness, we profess to have fellowship with Him, we speak falsely and are not adhering to the truth. But if we live in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of

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Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we claim to be already free from sin, we lead ourselves astray and the truth has no place in our hearts. If we confess our sins, He is so faithful and just that He forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. If we deny that we have sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Message has no place in our hearts. Dear children, I write thus to you in order that you may not sin. If any one sins, we have an Advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is an atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we may know that we know Him – if we obey His commands (I John 1:1-2:3, Weymouth translation).

In the *light* of this passage, we know that Christ walks in our past. He walks in all our *dark* rooms that we “pretend” are closed and shut. Hebrews 4:12-13 (Weymouth translation) states, “For God’s Message is full of life and power, and is keener than the sharpest two-edged sword. It pierces even to the severance of soul from spirit, and penetrates between the joints and the marrow, and it can discern the secret thoughts and purposes of the heart. And no created thing is able to escape its scrutiny; but everything lies bare and completely exposed before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” *When He who is Light walks in our darkness, our darkness flees.*

First, we acknowledge, confess, and take full responsibility for our darkness and, second, we invoke the radiance of God in Christ to shine His grace and forgiveness into the darkness of our past. We ask Him to fill our past with His forgiveness and cleansing. We offer to Him all that we are ashamed of, all that we wish we could forget, all that still pains and hurts us, all of the hurt that we have caused others, and all of the places and thoughts that we are afraid of.

Not only does the darkness of our past cause us to stumble in our walk with God, our past successes can too! Remember this warning, “He who thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall” (I Corinthians 10:12, NKJV). Success often leads to pride and “God sets Himself against the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (I Peter 5:5, Weymouth translation). So, Christ also walks in our past successes. We see Him as the One who has, in the past, worked in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We offer to Him all that we are proud of, all that we cherish and fondly remember, all our joys and pleasures, and all the blessings that God has bestowed on others through us.

God walks with us in all that is our past, whether good or bad, righteous or unrighteous, *in order to lead us forward!*
As Patrick invoked, *Christ behind me* today.

Christ before me

The Triune God is the eternal Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Author and *Finisher* of our faith. During the last week of His earthly sojourn, Christ told his despairing disciples:

Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God: trust in me also. In my Father’s house there are many resting-places. Were it otherwise, I would have told you; for I am going to make ready a place for you. And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me, that where I am you also may be (John 14:1-3, Weymouth translation).

Christ told his soon to be defeated disciples that He was going before them to make ready a resting place for them. He went before them (and us, His chosen) as He journeyed to the Cross. He went before them (and us, His chosen) as He died. He went before them (and us, His chosen) as He lay in the tomb for three days. He went before them (and us, His chosen) as He rose from the dead. He went before them (and us, His chosen) as He ascended to Father’s house. He went before them (and us, His chosen) as He prepared the resting-places where He would dwell

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eternally with us and in us. He went before them (and us, His chosen) as He returned to His disciples in the giving of His Holy Spirit ... sealing them on their foreheads with tongues of fire-glorify as an emblem that *God now blessedly dwells among men and women redeemed by His blood and grace.*

For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place: "This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon Himself His crown shall flourish" (Psalm 132:13-18, NKJV).

Christ walks ahead of us on the road we tread. Wherever life leads us, *He has gone before us.* He is the Good Shepherd and a good shepherd goes before His flock preparing and protecting the road to be traveled. And life will one day surely lead us to the shadow of death. Because Christ took death to Himself and rendered it powerless (Hebrews 2:14-15), He is there before us and at this sure and certain *summit of commencement.* Because of the manifestation of His gracious presence, we shall know the liberty of joyfully proclamation, "I will fear no evil, for You are with me" (Psalm 23:4, NKJV).

As Patrick invoked, *Christ before me* today.

Christ beside me

Read carefully Christ's words of comfort, assurance and peace:

For this reason I charge you not to be over-anxious about your lives, inquiring what you are to eat or what you are to drink, nor yet about your bodies, inquiring what clothes you are to put on. Is not the life more precious than its food, and the body than its clothing? Look at the birds which fly in the air: they do not sow or reap or store up in barns, but your Heavenly Father feeds them: are not you of much greater value than they? Which of you by being over-anxious can add a single foot to his height? And why be anxious about clothing? Learn a lesson from the wild lilies. Watch their growth. They neither toil nor spin, and yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his magnificence could array himself like one of these. And if God so clothes the wild herbage which to-day flourishes and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, is it not much more certain that He will clothe you, you men of little faith? Do not be over-anxious, therefore, asking 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For all these are questions that Gentiles are always asking; but your Heavenly Father knows that you need these things – all of them. But make His Kingdom and righteousness your chief aim, and then these things shall all be given you in addition. Do not be over-anxious, therefore, about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own cares. Enough for each day are its own troubles (Matthew 6:25-34, Weymouth translation).

If Christ feeds the birds that fly, if Christ clothes the fields with lilies, if Christ is beside the sparrow that falls (Matthew 10:29), then surely Christ is beside us daily.

Christ beside us is light in our darkness. Christ beside us is companionship in our loneliness. Christ beside us is strength in our weakness. Christ beside us is guide when we do not know the way. Christ beside us is the yoke of our burdens. Christ beside us not only carries our burdens, *He carries us.* Christ beside us is the healing in our pain. Christ beside us is the clarity in our confusion. Christ beside us is contentedness in our anxiety. Christ beside us is sustenance to our every need. Christ beside us is the message we speak to others. Christ beside us is the water we give to the thirsty. Christ beside us is the bread we give to the hungry.

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As Patrick invoked, *Christ beside me* today.

Christ to win me

We are in warfare, a warfare of the spirit dimension (called the “heavenlies” in Scripture). *Let us not belittle this battle.* Daily, we face the enemy of our souls, the accuser of the brethren, a roaring lion seeking to devour, a crafty schemer bent on destruction and death. Yet, God affirms:

Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of the righteous be delivered? But thus says the LORD: “Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible be delivered; For I will contend with him who contends with you, And I will save your children. I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. All flesh shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 49:24-26, NKJV).

For every attack of evil and the enemy, Christ has already gained the victory. Christ gained the victory through His death, resurrection, and ascension. Christ *has already* plundered the strong man’s house (Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 11:20-22). Christ *has already* rendered powerless the devil who had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14). Christ *has already* disarmed the devil (Colossians 2:14-15). Christ has already led captive a host of captives (Ephesians 4:8-11). Christ *has already* rendered powerless the devil’s works (I John 3:8). Christ, as the triumphant Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5) is the only lion *with teeth*. Christ has authoritative “bite in His bark,” a bark, according to Psalm 2:9, that dashes nations to pieces like a potter’s vessel. Satan, as a mimic lion, prowls seeking to devour only those who do not know that *his bark has no bite*.

Then I heard a loud voice speaking in Heaven. It said, “The salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God have now come, and the sovereignty of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren has been hurled down – he who, day after day and night after night, was wont to accuse them in the presence of God. But they have gained the victory over him because of the blood of the Lamb and of the testimony which they have borne, and because they held their lives cheap and did not shrink even from death. For this reason be glad, O Heaven, and you who live in Heaven! Alas for the earth and the sea! For the Devil has come down to you; full of fierce anger, because he knows that his appointed time is short.” (Revelation 12:10-12, Weymouth translation).

Just as Christ crushed Satan’s head on the Cross (Genesis 3:15), His people who are in union with Him and His victory do the same (Romans 16:20). We belong to the “called out ones,” the *ekklesia* (church) of God and one of the functions of this called out body is to remove from the enemy all strongholds that he has once taken (but now has no legal right to possess). Satan’s rights are only squatter’s rights. In the name and authority of Christ, Satan has no legal right to any previously gained stronghold. We therefore speak defeat to strongholds in our personal lives, the lives of our family, the lives of our friends, the lives of fellow-believers, the lives of our enemies, and the lives of communities and nations.

On the cross, Christ announced, “It is finished.” By that, He meant that He had completed His work in winning the salvation of man and the nations. In and through the Cross, He has made “all things new.” On the Cross He saw the end, as depicted in Revelation 21-22, *at the beginning*. His work on the Cross *initiated* His salvation that would eventually spread to every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (read Revelation 5). It is the outworking of this salvation in history that is not yet complete. Many strongholds (in individuals and nations) have yet to be renounced and recovered. His perfect work is not yet complete in me, in you, or on the earth. There are many things each day that will both cloak and assault God’s truth, God’s word, God’s will, and God’s victory in Christ. In spite of all

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opposition, He will complete, i.e., *win* His work *both* in me (Philippians 1:6; Psalm 138:8) and in the nations (Psalm 86:8-9; Isaiah 11:9; Malachi 1:11).

As Patrick invoked, *Christ win me* today.

Christ to comfort and restore me

The third person of the strong Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is denoted in Scripture as the *comforter* or “one who, as an Advocate, comes alongside to help.” An advocate is one who is summoned by someone to the *side* of a person in need. Christ has summoned the Comforter to succor and aid His people (see John 16). An advocate is also one who acts as a legal defense counsel, one who defends a client in the court of law.

For it is in Christ that the fullness of God’s nature dwells embodied, and in Him you are made complete, and He is the Lord of all princes and rulers. In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not performed by hand, when you threw off your sinful nature in true Christian circumcision; having been buried with Him in your baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith produced within you by God who raised Him from among the dead. And to you – dead as you once were in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your natural state – He has nevertheless given Life with Himself, having forgiven us all our transgressions. The bond, with its requirements, which was in force against us and was hostile to us, He cancelled, and cleared it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross. And the hostile princes and rulers He shook off from Himself, and boldly displayed them as His conquests, when by the Cross He triumphed over them (Colossians 2:9-15, Weymouth translation).

In the Cross of Christ, the bond (sentence of death – “for the wages of sin is death” – see Romans 6:23, NKJV) has been cancelled. The Advocate speaks to the Law as a Righteous and Good Judge, “My client is not guilty because his sentence of death has been nailed to the Cross. Christ, in His death, has taken the sentence of death for my client upon Himself. Hence, you no longer have any legal basis for any hostile accusation against my client.”

The Advocate, in the person of the Holy Spirit, applies the finished work of Christ to our lives: “... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23, NKJV). Instead of perishing in horror, we are given the gift of eternal life – knowing God in Christ (John 17:3). This eternal life, this knowing God, is life in full abundance (John 10:10).

It is the Comforter, sent to us by Christ, who strengthens us day by day. It is the Comforter who daily exudes in us resurrection life. It is the Comforter who is for us the daily well-spring of refreshment, restoration, and renewal (Psalm 23:2). Through the Comforter, we shall not perish, but live in the Light, Truth, and Life of God every day.

As Patrick invoked, *Christ comfort and restore me* today.

Christ beneath me

The following words were penned specifically for the wife and children of a husband and father who, one dreary and cold winter morning many, many years ago, walked out into a snow storm and never returned.

*Surely He has borne our grief, Surely He carried our sorrows;
Touched by our feelings, moved by our tears,
in our darkest shadows.*

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*Underneath and all around are the everlasting arms;
God is our refuge, God is our strength,
in our night His day dawns.*

*Sorrow not as others do, for our hope is ever new;
Father to the fatherless;
this His promise for you.*

*The oil of joy for those who mourn,
to heavy hearts, a garment of praise.
We believe through all our days
that God is good in all His ways.²*

The father of the person who wrote this poem almost always prefaced his prayers with this affirmation, “Underneath and all around are the everlasting arms.” This “call of promise” is taken directly from Scripture: “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms ...” (Deuteronomy 33:17, NKJV).

Underneath are the everlasting arms ... beneath us and all that we have experienced, are experiencing, and will experience are arms, strong arms, everlasting arms, the arms of Christ *that bear the imprint of Roman nails*. No matter how far we sink, no matter what bottom we can reach, *beneath us are the Arms that hung from the Cross*. It is because of the Cross that God in Christ can descend to the lowest pit of pits and *lift us up*. Christ has experienced the lowest of the pits, hell itself, for our sake. It is because of those nail-scared hands that we can rest assured that, no matter what may happen in life, *Christ will lift us up*.

Corrie Ten Boom (1892-1983), who, during World War II, experienced the hell of Ravensbrook concentration camp, knew what she was talking about when she said, “There is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still.”

“The Lord upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down” (Psalm 145:14, NKJV).

As Patrick invoked, *Christ beneath me* today.

Christ above me

Where does Christ lift us? Christ lifts us up to the heavenly realm in order to show us that we “sit enthroned” with Him there (Ephesians 2:6). What does it mean for us to “sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus?”

If however you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, enthroned at God’s right hand. Give your minds to the things that are above, not to the things that are on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ appears – He is our true Life – then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your earthward inclinations – fornication, impurity, sensual passion, unholy desire, and all greed, for that is a form of idolatry. It is on account of these very sins that God’s anger is coming, and you also were once addicted to them, while you were living under their power. But now you must rid yourselves of every kind of sin – angry and passionate outbreaks, ill-will, evil speaking, foul-mouthed abuse – so that these may never soil your lips. Do not speak falsehoods to one another, for you have stripped off the old self with its doings, and have clothed yourselves with the new self which is being

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remoulded into full knowledge so as to become like Him who created it. In that new creation there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free man, but Christ is everything and is in all of us. Clothe yourselves therefore, as God's own people holy and dearly loved, with tender-heartedness, kindness, lowliness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; bearing with one another and readily forgiving each other, if any one has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, you also must forgive. And over all these put on love, which is the perfect bond of union; and let the peace which Christ gives settle all questionings in your hearts, to which peace indeed you were called as belonging to His one Body; and be thankful (Colossians 3:1-15, Weymouth translation).

Seek the things which are above ... give your mind to the things above, not to the things on the earth. What does this mean? You have heard the observation, "That person is so heavenly minded he is no earthly good." Contrary to a simplistic interpretation of this text, Scripture does *not* command us to "think about heaven all the time" or "to practice our harp playing for future heavenly tunes." We are required by God to think through the Scriptures in order to understand their meaning and import. Taken in context, Paul is commanding believers to "think about life in terms of the finished work of Christ." In contrast, we are not to think about life as if Christ never died, rose again, and ascended. This is what Paul means by "give your mind to the things above, not to the things on earth."

Paul goes on to expound the meaning of this type of thinking. He says that in Christ we have died. Died to what? In Christ, we have died to an old and false way of thinking and living. Christ is now our life ... He lives His life in us and through us. Christ living in us is true glory and this glory will be manifested for all to see at the last day (John 6:39-40), the consummation of all things.

Paul next tells us what "giving your mind to the things on earth" encompasses: fornication, impurity, sensual passion, unholy desire, and all greed, for that is a form of idolatry. Your old man, outside of union in Christ, was once addicted to this way of thinking and "so-called" living. Can you really denote angry and passionate outbreaks, ill-will, evil speaking, foul-mouthed abuse as "living"? This "lifestyle" is really death and deserves the judgment of God. Wonder of wonders, God has judged this death in the person of Christ. Now, on the basis of the death of Christ, Paul tells us to strip ourselves of this type of thinking ... put on a new mind that is in accordance with who you now are in Christ. Paul is telling us, using an apt visual metaphor, to take off our old, stinky clothes and put on the fresh garments of the new creation: speaking truth, being tender-hearted, exhibiting kindness, lowliness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering; bearing with one another and readily forgiving each other and walking in peace, unity, and thankfulness.

The new creation is the reality that Christ brings to us in redemption. In the Cross of Christ, all things are made new. We are commanded to give our minds to these things which are above.

So that if any one is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old state of things has passed away; a new state of things has come into existence" (II Corinthians 5:17, Weymouth translation).

As Patrick invoked, *Christ above me* today.

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Christ in quiet³

Christ talks about praying to Him in your “inner room or closet” (Matthew 6:6-7). Isaiah speaks of the strength of quietness, “For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength ...” (Isaiah 30:15, NKJV).

Our society is noise oriented. Modern man wants to be *amused* and entertained. Note that amuse is the opposite of muse, a Biblical word for meditation. One weapon of the world is the noise and amusement that stops us from communing with God in silence. *In coming to Christ we must learn to be still in a world of chaos* (Psalm 46).

How can we be still to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit above all other voices? We are responsible for the state of our minds. All of our actions flow from our thoughts (Proverbs 23:7); today’s actions are but the belated results of what our thoughts have been dwelling on for the last months. We are obviously responsible for our actions and therefore we must be responsible for the source of those actions ... our thought life.

As we have seen, Scripture commands us to order our thoughts and direct them to things above; we are to see the whole of life out from the perspective on the sovereign throne of Christ (Colossians 3:2; Philippians 4:8; Revelation 4).

We cannot be responsible for the many thoughts that present themselves to us, but we are accountable for those on which we choose to dwell. Many thoughts knock on our doors, but we are only responsible for those we invite in for coffee!

If we are going to live on a deeper level than jostling thoughts, we must cultivate the art of stifling those thoughts so that we may hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. To take one hour of our day and use it to practice the art of stillness will bring a stillness to every hour of the day or night.

Note the lifestyle of Jesus. He was a man of the marketplace. He was surrounded by the bustle of life. He lived an intensely active life. Yet, even in this intensity, His life was lived in a stillness that could detect His Father’s whisper within. He refused to react to pressure from every idea that presented itself to Him. His life was not a tennis ball bounced between every demand and pressure of the day (John 2:3; 7:2-4; 6:14-15; Matthew 16:22; John 14:10). That stillness came to Him from His habitual withdrawal into the aloneness of His Father’s presence (Luke 5:16; 6:12; Matthew 14:23)

Since Jesus chose to withdraw and be still, then any entering into silence will be by our choice. Our minds and bodies await the command of our will, and it is good to take authority, ordering ourselves to relax and be still. Our yelling, shoving, whimpering, trembling emotions are indulged in by choice. We can command silence that we may wait on God (Exodus 14:13; II Chronicles 20:3). In contrast, we have allowed our fragmented selves to talk to us producing confusion within. We must now learn the biblical art of talking to ourselves (Psalm 42:3-5)!

If an emotion is dominating our minds or a decision presses to be made, it may be advisable to go beyond commanded stillness. It must be shared with the Lord. We do this by vocalizing it, letting it come out in words, and, in the silence that follows, hear His answers. As we articulate what is on our hearts, we are sharing our lives in Him who is all answers in Himself. It is in the expectant casting of care upon Him that we align ourselves to His wisdom in the following stillness.

In all of this we are not seeking to unthink or to achieve a blank mind. Biblical Christian meditation is the replacing of our thoughts with His. We do not say, “I will not think of this,” but rather, “I will think of that.” In seeking not to think of something, we inevitably think of it for we must constantly remind our minds of it in our command not to think of it! *In seeking not to think a thought, we double its power in our minds.*

³ I credit the following analysis to Rev. Malcolm Smith and his teaching on Biblical Christian meditation.

The All-Encompassing Christ

As we command ourselves to be still in the presence of the Lord, releasing all our problems, joys, and decisions into His hands, we quietly worship Him and so direct our minds expectantly to a word from Him. There can be no direction to our lives, no ongoing transformation until we learn to be still.

As Patrick invoked, *Christ in quiet* today.

Christ in danger

It is our practice of “being still” in God’s presence that assuages all assaults of danger. Patrick stilled himself by daily affirming, “I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity, by invocation of the same, the Three in One and the One in Three.”

Note carefully the breadth and scope of Psalm 46. Pause and ponder carefully the preceding statements when you come to the Hebrew word *Selah*.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling – Selah. There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge – Selah. Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge – Selah (Psalm 46, NKJV).

Note especially God’s work in judging the nations. As He judged nations in the Psalmist David’s day, *so also does God judge nations today* (and in every period of human history). We still ourselves in the midst of troubled waters, shaking mountains, rage, and desolations *in order to affirm that God will be exalted among the nations*.

It is this peace in trouble that Stephen testified to at his stoning (Acts 7:54-56). It is this peace in trouble that the aged and beloved pastor Polycarp, 2nd century AD, affirmed when flames began to lick and eventually extinguish his mortal body:

“O Lord God Almighty, the Father of Thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the knowledge of Thee, the God of angels and powers and of all creation and of the whole race of the righteous, who live in Thy presence; I bless Thee for that Thou hast granted me this day and hour, that I might receive a portion amongst the number of martyrs in the cup of [Thy] Christ unto resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and of body, in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit. May I be received among these in Thy presence this day, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as Thou didst prepare and reveal it beforehand, and hast accomplished it, Thou that art the faithful and true God. For this cause, yea and for all things, I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, through the eternal and heavenly High-priest, Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, through whom with Him and the Holy Spirit be glory both now [and ever] and for the ages to come. Amen.”⁴

⁴ <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/martyrdom-polycarp-lightfoot.html>

The All-Encompassing Christ

In the words of David Adam, “In the storm itself, in the sinking of the disciple, in the opposition of the enemy, in the hells and crucifixions, in the betrayals and denials, in the ebbing out of life, *The Risen Lord is there.*”⁵

As Patrick invoked, *Christ in danger* today.

Christ in hearts of all who love me

God loves us and serves us through people because this is the way He has chosen to display His practical love. This is the way the body of Christ is meant to operate. One gives and the other receives so that the receiver may someday become a giver.

God meets our financial needs through our employer. God meets our emotional needs through friends, family, and church affiliations. Unfortunately, many times people fail us (as we do others). In this context of interpersonal failure, we always remember God’s intent and overruling providence. Even if someone fails us, God will use someone else to display His love, mercy, and care for us. Even if our earthly father and mother forsake us, God our heavenly Father will never forsake us (Psalm 27:10; 68:5; Hebrews 13:5-6).

Thank God daily for His love revealed to you in the hearts of those who love you.

As Patrick invoked, *Christ in hearts of all who love me* today.

Christ in mouth of friend and stranger ...

God called Mother Teresa (1910-1997) to minister to the poor and needy of Calcutta, India when one day, in the streets of this vast city, she encountered a beggar kneeling in supplication. As she approached him, he spoke only two words to her, *two words that transformed her life*, “I thirst.” At this instant, she saw Christ “thirsting” in this beggar. Thus began her life-long service to the poor and needy, not only of India, but of the world.

We oftentimes do not realize that Christ comes to us daily in the guise of friends, strangers, and the needy. Let us make a blessed habit of alerting ourselves to the personal presence of Christ as we serve the needy whose paths God engineers to intersect with our lives.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then will He sit upon His glorious throne, and all the nations will be gathered into His presence. And He will separate them from one another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and will make the sheep stand at His right hand, and the goats at His left. Then the King will say to those at His right, “Come, my Father’s blessed ones, receive your inheritance of the Kingdom which has been divinely intended for you ever since the creation of the world. For when I was hungry, you gave me food; when I was thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was homeless, you gave me a welcome; when I was ill-clad, you clothed me; when I was sick, you visited me; when I was in prison, you came to see me.” “When, Lord,” the righteous will reply, “did we see Thee hungry, and feed Thee; or thirsty, and give Thee drink? When did we see Thee homeless, and give Thee a welcome? Or ill-clad, and clothe Thee? When did we see Thee sick or in prison, and come to see Thee?” But the King will answer them, “In solemn truth I tell you that in so far as you rendered such services to one of the humblest of these my brethren, you rendered them to myself” (Matthew 25:31-40, Weymouth translation).

As Patrick invoked, *Christ in mouth of friend and stranger* today.

⁵ Adam, p. 103.