

Christ Above All

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The beautiful song “Sweeter Than All” written in 1900 by Johnson Oatman, Jr. and sung by faithful Christians still today expresses the joy and satisfaction of placing “Christ above all.”

Christ will me His aid afford,
Never to fall, never to fall;
While I find my precious Lord
Sweeter than all, sweeter than all.

Jesus is now and ever will be,
Sweeter than all the world to me,
Since I heard His loving call,
Sweeter than all, sweeter than all.¹

It seems for most people that there are only about three times in their lives that they really identify with the concept of placing “Christ above all.” In times of severe sickness it is not difficult to observe that people become a little more open to the idea of praying to God. A college professor once observed that a death bed confession usually sticks if the person goes on to die but is seldom acted upon if he lives! The personal experience of suffering and pain evokes an awareness of the frailty of life. There may be a thousand beds in the local hospital but unless I am in one of them, sickness and disease are something other people experience. When the mind and body do not properly function as before, help from above is sometimes sought after and upon its arrival a welcomed relief.

The death of a loved one is accompanied by such an indescribable sense of loss and emptiness that the bereaved is sometimes confronted with a keen sense of eternity. The Bible says, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also *He has put eternity in their hearts*, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, emphasis added). Human beings have the ability to conceptualize infinite depths of time and space, and upon the loss of a loved one they know this cannot be the end of them. Perhaps they have heard what the Bible says, “For thus saith the high and lofty One *that inhabiteth eternity*, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15, emphasis added). At such times placing “Christ above all” seems like a very good idea.

Another time most people identify with putting “Christ above all” is at funerals. It is rare, indeed, if the deceased is not presented during the eulogy and message as a devout believer who could scarcely utter a word without mentioning his respect and admiration for Jesus Christ. Yet, unless the departed had in the past attended a funeral at the church building most of his acquaintances would be hard pressed to remember a time when he was ever there. It would seem that the minister lavishes all the redemptive work of Christ over the cold corpse as if death itself had somehow appeased his sins. “We all know he wasn’t a big church-goer, but I know he is going to heaven because I heard him say one time, ‘I’m going home’.”

“Christ above all” means really having Jesus Christ in the primary place in our lives on a daily basis—not just when the church meets for worship. The reason for diminishing attendance records at the services of the church is due not because people are on sick beds, working, or traveling, but because the conviction of having “Christ above all” is absent. That close communion with Christ which is “sweeter than all” is what we urge people to seek and find every day of their lives so that not only in times of sickness or loss of a loved one or even when our own death approaches will the “peace that passes all understanding” be ours.

I can follow all the way,
Hearing Him call, hearing Him call;
Finding Him from day to day,
Sweeter than all, sweeter than all.

When I reach the crystal sea,
Voices will call, voices will call;
But my Savior’s voice will be
Sweeter than all, sweeter than all!²

¹cf. Matthew 28:20; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:14.

²cf. Revelation 22:1; Matthew 25:34.