‘I knew a man in Christ,’ wrote Paul (2 Corinthians 12:2). That’s a strange expression. Nobody would ever write: ‘I knew a man in Napoleon, in Buddha, in Lincoln.’ It is a startling expression, and yet Paul frequently spoke about being ‘in Christ.’

He meant the Christian person is united with Christ. The life of Christ is in a man. He does not merely believe in Christ; he is connected with Christ and Christ lives within him.

I knew a man in Christ whose children said, ‘It is easy to be good when dad is around.’ His Christlike presence brought it out of them.

I knew a man who had been a hard, brutal drunkard, but was now a blacksmith ‘in Christ.’ One day a farmer brought his mare to this blacksmith to have her shod. He brought along straps because the horse was so difficult nobody could get near her to put on shoes unless she was strapped. But the blacksmith ‘in Christ’ said, ‘Let me get acquainted with her’. He walked around her, stroked her gently, and spoke to her kindly and softly, while she rubbed her nose against him, smelled his clothes.

She seemed to discover that this was a new creature – a kind she had never met before, especially in a blacksmith’s shop. Everything about him seemed to say to her, ‘Don’t be afraid,’ and she was not afraid. He lifted her foot and took off a shoe, and from that day onwards he shod that mare without strap or tackle, while she stood in perfect quiet…’ (Love Slaves).

...with Jesus there was the quality of love which is the first of the fruits of the Holy Spirit’s presence. The ceaseless activity of love as expressed in the life of Jesus is the distinctive element in the Christian experience of holiness. Therefore Christlikeness is holiness. Where Christ is enthroned, there is holiness. Yet holiness is never an ‘imitation’ of Christ, if by that is meant a self-conscious external patterning. Christian holiness will spring from the inward possession of that same Holy Spirit who was in Jesus and by whose power he wrought and taught.