

THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS

by

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CHAPTER TWO

THE IMPARTED LIFE

TEXT: “**I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly**” (John 10:10).

THIS was the new note in the message of Jesus Christ. It fell, for the most part, upon uncomprehending ears. After nineteen centuries of alleged gospel preaching it is still for the most part uncomprehended.

- That Christ was a teacher of ethics, as in the Sermon on the Mount, is understood.
- That He died for our sins is, as a fact, understood.
- That He changed the issue from righteousness by works to righteousness by faith, moving the center from Mount Sinai in Arabia to Mount Calvary in Judea, is understood, though haltingly.

But that He came to impart to believing human beings a new quality of life, even the very life which was and is in Himself—this is not understood.

Eternal life is, indeed, much spoken of, but it is understood to mean mere duration of being—the persistency of life notwithstanding the fact of physical death.

In the teaching of Jesus Christ, as in the apostolic writings, the eternal life imparted by Christ to all who believe in Him, is indeed a term implying endlessness of life, but, since endlessness is also a quality of mere human life, eternal life is, far more emphatically, a term of quality, of kind.

The ministry of John the Baptist also had its startling message, “**And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees.**”

There was to be no more experimentation with the old Adamic tree, no more seeking of fruit from a stock that, after centuries of testing, could produce but wild fruit. “**Make the tree good**” is the new word, and this can only be done by giving the tree a new life and nature. “**That which is born of the flesh is flesh,**” and can never be made aught else. The old man under the new gospel is to be crucified with Christ, not improved by higher ideals. “**They that are in the flesh cannot please God.**” The Adamic taint forbids it, and is ineradicable.

Two things are said by Christ in this tenth chapter of John:

- He gives his life *for* the sheep (vs. 11, 15, 17), and this is *redemption*;
- He gives His life *to* the sheep (vs. 28) and this is *regeneration*.

Precisely this duality is found in the third chapter. The sheep are under a two-fold disability: they are “**perishing**” under the curse and sentence of the law, and must be redeemed by one able and willing to be “**made a curse**” in their stead; but also they are born of the flesh and therefore mere flesh-men, unable to “**see**” or “**enter**” the kingdom of God, and for this there is no remedy save in a rebirth.

But precisely these two needs are met by the gospel of the love of God; the Son of man must be lifted up on the cross to redeem the perishing, and the Holy Spirit imparts the divine nature and the new life to all who believe on the Son of man as crucified for their sins.

THE NEW LIFE IS CHRIST’S LIFE

Mere endlessness of being would not be “**eternal**” life. Eternal is “**from everlasting to everlasting**.” Only He who “**was in the beginning with God . . . was God**” could bestow, through the eternal Spirit, eternal life.

And this imparted life is His own life. “**I am the vine, ye are the branches.**”

What a symbol of unity of life is the vine with its branches. The branch has no independent source of life. The life of the vine and the life of the branch are one. All possibility of renewal, of growth, of fruitfulness depends upon the life energy of the vine. Well might the vine say to the branch, “**Because I live, ye shall live also.**”

It would not be possible to state more strongly than does our Lord this identity in life of Himself and those who through faith in Him crucified have been born again.

- “**As . . . I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me**”;
- “**As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us**”;
- “**I in them, and thou in me.**”

The vital suggestions are, if possible, even more intense in our Lord’s simile of “**the corn of wheat**.” Just as a grain of wheat sown, dies indeed, yet dies into countless grains of wheat, giving its own life to each, so Christ speaks of His own death.

And this testimony to oneness of life with Christ pervades the apostolic explanation of the gospel. The church is declared to be His body. The human body, composed of many members, is the figure used to express the oneness with Him of the “**many members**” who constitute, like the members of the natural body, one organism, and this organism is called “**Christ**” (I Corinthians 12:12). It is declared of Christ, not only that He gave life to the believer, but that He “**is our life.**” And John declares the record to be “**that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.**”

THE INLIVING CHRIST TO BE OUTLIVED

God expects nothing from the flesh—the self-man. In the divine reckoning our old man was crucified with Christ. The old man is summed up in one terrific word of three letters—sin. Acts of sin proceed from a nature which is sin.

In one great and luminous passage the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul states, in the terms of the apostle's actual experience, the fact and method of the new life: "**I am crucified with Christ.**"

This is a fact of revelation not a fact of consciousness. Paul does not "feel" crucified, but in the divine reckoning he is counted so, and this the apostle also reckons to be true. God expects nothing from the old Saul of Tarsus, and in the seventh of Romans experience the apostle has learned the final truth about Saul:

"In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

Then comes a fact of consciousness, "**Nevertheless I live,**" followed by another fact of revelation, "**Christ liveth in me.**"

Saul lives as yet, but death or the return of Christ will be the end of the Saul life, and Christ also lives in Paul.

Then comes the practical, present outcome of it all, "**The life which I now live in the flesh**" (body).

How shall that life be lived? The Holy Spirit gives an answer to which, speaking broadly, the church has never risen.

THE METHOD OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Two theories of Christian living here on earth have measured, and do measure, the average faith.

First, life by precept, by rule.

There is a large truth here. The Bible is a great instruction in righteousness; a great revelation of the mind of God about human life. No inner light can take the place of the divine revelation. It is perfect ethically and also complete. But it has the fatal defect of furnishing no dynamic. "**The law made nothing perfect.**"

Precept gives a perfect rule of life, and by it life must always be tested, but precept carries no enablement. "**The law . . . was weak through the flesh.**" A chart does not carry us across the ocean, but it shows us where we are on the trackless deep, and where to go. The life by precept was tried under law and left the whole world of humanity in speechless guilt before God.

Still more hopeless is the notion of life by the example of Christ.

“What would Christ do?” is the formula. As to immoralities, selfishness, worldliness, the answer is easy. In all the real crises of life it utterly breaks down.

Our conclusions as to what Christ would do are vitiated by our limitations of habit of thought, of unspirituality, of ignorance of Christ. In His earth-life He constantly did the things that shocked every religionist in Palestine—Pharisee, Sadducee, Herodian. He did not do the things they thought He ought to do, but every day did something they thought inconsistent with His Messiahship.

What then is Christian living?

It is Christ living out His life in the terms of our personality, and under the conditions which environ us. We do not ask, “What would Christ do?” we say to self, “**Yet not I,**” and yield our powers to the sway of the in-living Christ.

“Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus,” (the practical expression of our co-crucifixion with Him being “**having no confidence in the flesh**”), “**that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.**”

And we are not to be discouraged by failures. Not all at once does Christ gain complete control over powers and faculties accustomed to the rule of self; but, “**walking in the Spirit,**” there assuredly comes an increasing sense of peace, rest, joy.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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