

To Live Is Christ

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In the religious world there are many schools of thought about salvation. Two of the most prevalent are Calvin's doctrine of salvation and the opposing doctrine called Arminianism. Neither one of these can lead us to the truth. We do not come to God by doctrine; we are drawn by the Spirit of God. There is only One that can lead us to the truth of what God is doing--the Holy Spirit. God Himself wants to come and indwell us. He has given us His Spirit so that we can know Him and walk in His life and in His purpose.

Our intention here is not to refute doctrine with doctrine, or to use the scriptures to refute the error of any teaching. It is to show us that salvation is found in the person of Christ, not in teachings about Christ. The only way we can please God is to stay in union with Him in our walk of faith. It is a waste of time to try to refute the errors so evident in both teachings--whether Calvinism or Arminian doctrine.

If we are looking for scriptures to refute doctrine, we will never come to the actual experience of life in Christ. So in this discussion our intent is to lay down the principle of life which supercedes all doctrines.

It is the natural mind which has established certain doctrines or principles, backed up by the recorded account of God's working called the scriptures. As Christians, are we to be governed by a set of doctrines, or are we to be governed by the presence, power and working of God Himself? Only as we walk according the Spirit can we fulfill righteousness (Romans 8). Man tries to define God, and ends up following after a god of his mind, rather than knowing the true and living God and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

Our Eternal Security

No doctrine created by man can secure us. We can state our doctrines, we can minister them to many, but only God Himself can secure us. So many people have taken the words written down for us, the scriptures, and made them to mean what they want them to mean, thus deceiving themselves, going their own way, following after man and his teaching, not even realizing that they are deceived. But God has given the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, and any doctrine man has established misses the mark that God has set for us.

The mark God has set is Himself, and Jesus Christ came to bring us into the reality of that. Only as we walk in the Spirit can we know God. Only as we do His will can we know His doctrine. Doctrine is not what saves us. The Lord Himself saves us. Salvation is in Him. Life is in Him. If we look to other things and think that we are "all right" by keeping a set of rules or abiding in a certain doctrine man has set down, we are deceiving ourselves.

There is a thinking which ultimately orders our lives: law or grace. Grace does teach us to live soberly, righteously, godly in this present world (Titus 2:12). The law by the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has

made us free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). What we believe does influence our walk, and more than we realize. If we believe doctrine, our thinking and our walk will be governed by what we believe. But if we have a relationship with God, if we have the Spirit of God to lead us and guide us, He's not going to lead and guide us in doctrine; He's going to lead and guide us in life. Will we be controlled by our minds or by the Spirit of God? Man can know doctrine down to the letter, yet not know God. But knowing God and doing His will allows man to know the true doctrine. This is what Jesus told us: *"If you do My will, you will know My doctrine [teaching]"* (John 7:17).

Scripture vs. Relationship

II Corinthians 3:3, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." Paul tells us in II Corinthians 3:6 that God has made us "able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

The scriptures are the written account of God's dealing with man. The scriptures were not given to give us life. Jesus Christ came that we might have life. But man has focused on the scriptures rather than God. The scriptures have become man's god, and he is missing God's purpose. The scriptures were not given for us to know God. It is the Spirit that has been given to lead us into truth, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Anything which is not of and by the Spirit is dead letter. The Spirit is the one who gives us life. The Spirit has been given so that God could come to abide within man, and that man might have a new life. That new life is the life of God, a "new and living way," where the Spirit is our ability, our power, to fulfill in us what has been in God's heart from the beginning of time.

Paul tells us in Colossians 3:4 that Christ is our life. The promise and gift of God were given when the church began on the day of Pentecost. It is a promise to all who will receive Him by faith. We do not receive the Holy Spirit automatically when we believe facts of the scriptures. But when we believe what God has promised us, we take His promise by faith and experience the person of the Holy Spirit coming to live within that we might live in union with God.

In John 5:39 we see Jesus telling the religious leaders of that day, *"You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life."* He said, *"They testify of me, and you will not come to me, that I might give you life."* This is the secret of what we are saying pertaining to the scriptures. Jesus recognized the scriptures, the account of God's working in the past, and the New Testament is the account of God's working through men in this new time of the Spirit. But these were never given to give us life.

We need to understand what the scriptures are given for, and we need to use them accordingly. We are told in II Timothy 3:16-17, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

If we want to follow after man's teaching, we will be eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But God has not called us to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but to live in His life, to be partakers of Him. It doesn't matter how good the teaching is; in fact, you can find man's teaching that is perfectly according to the letter of the Word. But teaching and doctrine can never bring us into the oneness that God has designed. Only the Spirit of God, God Himself, can do the work that He has designed, in and through us. God has given us the Spirit to lead us in truth. Our lives move

either according to a doctrine which governs our walk, or in union with God.

Many today have a mind religion. Some call it "mind over matter." But there are many so-called Christian fundamentalists who also have nothing more than a mind religion--because it is devoid of the Spirit of God. They talk about the Spirit of God, they speak about the Spirit being the One that leads them, but the reality is not there. The indwelling of the Spirit in individual believers is not there. Thus, they have a form of godliness, denying the power of God.

Living by Faith

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Faith comes as the Spirit makes His word alive to us, individually. Faith does not come just by hearing the scriptures; faith comes by hearing God. Man has taken God out of the "equation." But if we're going to move on in faith, knowing God, experiencing Him and walking in union with Him, God must be put back into the "equation."

In Hebrews 11, the account of those who had faith, every one heard God in a personal way. This word from God is what their faith was based upon. Faith comes by hearing God. It does not come just by hearing the scriptures. If we are going to have this relationship with God that He has designed, we must know the indwelling of the Spirit that has been given so that we can know and experience God.

We must continue to walk in Him, experiencing Him, and growing in the knowledge of Him. If we only have knowledge about Him, we have no more than a mind religion. When we say that so much of the so-called Christianity around us is no more than a mind religion, this is not to criticize, but to give direction, so that we might experience what God has for us--Himself. Man has held the scriptures up so high that the scriptures have become his god, and he ministers "truths" without the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Paul tells us in the third chapter of II Corinthians that what God is doing in this hour is more glorious than what He did in the beginning. In verses 9-11 we read, *"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."*

Here Paul is showing us that the old was glorious, but the new exceeds the old. The glory of the New Covenant, the new working of God, so far exceeds the old that it is as if the old had no glory. He is talking about the ministration of the Spirit, God actually coming to indwell His people.

Why Is the Spirit Given?

God has given the promise of the Holy Spirit to those that will believe--that they may have life, that they may be freed from sin and death, and that they may be partakers of a new law, the law of life in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit is the one that gives life. He is the one that quickens, and makes us alive to God in every way. He brings us back into union with God, to find purpose in why God created us. Man was created for God. God wants to come and indwell man. When we partake of the Spirit of God, God gives us the

ability now to know Him and to experience Him in a personal way. John tells us that we know He abides in us, not by what the scriptures tell us but *"by the Spirit which He hath given to us"* (I John 3:24). We know we dwell in Him and He dwells in us because He has given us of His Spirit.

From the very beginning, God sent the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. Jesus, recorded in the 14th chapter of John, said, *"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."* He continues in the 23rd verse to say, *"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."*

These are not just words that have been written down for us, but these are words that are spoken to us. God's words must be life. They must be words that He speaks to us individually, if we're going to have a place to move in faith. Too long we have repeated the scriptures and thought that was faith. We have said, "I believe it." We say that God has not changed, that He is the same today as He was yesterday. But you see, God has sent the Holy Spirit so that we might know Him in a personal way, that we might know the reality of what the scriptures speak about. He has not just given us a written account; He has not just sent us a letter that we read over and over again, and memorize. We are to be in love with Him. We are to walk only in the strength that He gives. We are to abide in Him, walking in union with Him.

Our union with God is to be the same union that the Father had with the Son. Jesus said that when the Father was speaking, He was speaking, and when the Father was working, He was working. This is the union that God has purposed to bring us into, a oneness with Himself and a oneness with each other. But that can only happen if we give God the pre-eminent place as our life, and walk in the Spirit rather than trying to follow a set of commandments written down, or a concept, or even an interpretation given to us according to what we say is the purpose of God.

God by the Spirit has come to direct us and lead us. We can see an example of this in the old very clearly if we have eyes to see it. In the tabernacle in the wilderness, there was a fire by night and a cloud by day. The people of God did not move unless that cloud or that fire moved. Today, God has given His Spirit, and He says, *"These are the sons of God, those that are led by the Spirit of God."* (Romans 8:14) We're not to be directed by the account that is set forth for us in scripture, but we are to be directed by God Himself who lives and dwells in those that are His.

When Jesus was preparing His disciples for His return to the Father, in several places in John 14-17 we see Him encouraging them about the Comforter that was to come. Jesus said He would send the Spirit of truth to His followers. He said nothing about sending them scriptures, or sending them a written account by His Spirit. He said He would send the actual Person of the Spirit, to come and be with them, and to guide them into all truth.

John says in his first epistle, *"You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things"* (I John 2:20). Further down he says, *"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him"* (v. 27). He is telling us that we are not just dependent on knowing the scriptures, but we have an anointing. We have what God has given us; we have God Himself to lead and guide us, to be with us and to empower us, to give us the ability that

we do not have separate from Him.

Eternal Life

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

Many are being deceived in this hour by those that name the name of Jesus, thinking that it is enough just to name His name, just to be sincere. But being sincere is not enough. We must move in truth. Jesus said, *"When I come, will I find faith?"* (Luke 18:8) Faith brings us into the reality of what we have been discussing, our union with God. We live in faith. We're not like the saints of old that just heard God and responded to what God said. We now have the living Word within us, the Holy Spirit indwelling us, and we now live by faith. We walk in union with God. We live His life by faith.

Eternal life is not a doctrine. Eternal life is knowing God and experiencing God right now. It's not just living for eternity. We already will exist for eternity whether we receive Christ or not. God has made us that way. The question is where we will spend eternity. God has made the way for us to walk now in His will, to do His purpose and be brought into the fullness of this oneness with God--that we all may be made one in Christ Jesus. The work has all been done, and will be done according to His power and His working, by the indwelling Spirit He has given.

If we have the Son, we have eternal life. If we continue in faith, we will know the glory of God's presence for all eternity. Peter tells us, *"If these things be in you and abound..."* (II Peter 1:8) and *"...give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall"* (v. 10).

Living in the Holy Place with God

We cannot know the truth or walk in it separate from God. This is revealed to us very clearly in the 15th chapter of John where Jesus says, "Separate from Me you can do nothing. You must abide in the Vine." Jesus Himself told His disciples that He did nothing separate from the Father. Jesus and His Father moved in perfect harmony and union. As sons and daughters of God, this is what God has called us to move in, and He has given us the ability in Himself. But we will have to come His way, and receive the Promise He has given of Himself--the Holy Spirit that would come to indwell us.

Everything Jesus did was in union with who He was. He never moved separate from His Father. He was always in union with His Father. As Jesus said in John 14, "Because I live, you shall live also." We may think living is just breathing, being alive in a natural way, but living is being alive in a spiritual way.

God has opened up the door to us, that we might come into the holiest of all--that is, into His presence--to live there, and to live in the union God has called us to live in, God indwelling man. It's no wonder that Paul calls it "a more glorious way" (II Corinthians 3). Man can have a form of godliness. Man can speak about Jesus, can speak about God, but yet not have what God designed for us. God's design is that He would come and indwell us and be our life. He has made every provision for this.

This is God's purpose for every believer. We are brought into this union with Him not by our own thinking or our own strength, but by the power and anointing of the Spirit of God which He has given.

But we must avail ourselves of God's provision. We must choose. This is not something we are predestined to do. The predestination of God is that He has predestined all things to find their climax in Christ. But we must choose Him, choose to come to God. Our own works count for nothing; there is nothing we can do; but we choose. God has given us a choice. He gave Adam a choice when He made him, and Adam chose the wrong thing. Thus sin entered into the world. We too have a choice. Are we going to live as God has designed, experiencing Him day by day, or will it be a life in this world for our own pleasures and enjoyment?

The True Gospel

All the religions of our day have a book. Many of them use the scriptures we use, the Bible. But it will never make them one. Even though some may believe the same things, it is only the Holy Spirit that can make us one and unite us with God, as God has designed.

We must come back to understand what the gospel is. The gospel is the good news that God has dealt with sin and has come to abide within. We're not talking about "another gospel"; we're talking about the gospel. Until we get back to ministering the gospel God has set forth in His Word, rather than a "believism" of certain facts or words that have been written down for us (the scriptures)--and putting our trust in the scriptures rather than in a living relationship with God--we will continue to miss what God has for us. Sadly, around the world in every culture, we see people that name the name of God and Jesus, yet with a lack of the presence and power of the Spirit moving in their midst to lead them, direct them, and unite them as He has designed.

God's purpose is not going to fail. God is working all things according to His will. The real question is, are we willing to humble ourselves and let God work? Are we willing to receive the promise that He has given, and not be those that are just worshipping the letter of the Word or defending the scriptures, or the Greek text it has been translated from? Instead, let us come into contact with a living God who speaks to us in power. He has given us Himself, that we might live His life.

This is exactly what the apostle Paul said: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20). If we know God, we know Him only by the Spirit. Someone may be able to recite the scriptures from memory, from Genesis to Revelation, yet still not know the living Christ, and not be living His life.

The real question is, do we have a religion of words and doctrines we believe, or do we have a relationship with the One who gave us the written account of His working? God has given us the promise of the Spirit so that we could know the One who inspired men to give us the account. Which would you rather have? Just the scriptures, the written account? Or would you rather have the One who gave us the account, and know the fullness of God's purpose by experiencing God Himself? God said He would come to indwell us. He said He would come to set us free from sin and death, making us alive unto Him. This is the gospel.

Your Choice

Speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus said, *"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23,24). This is the hour of God's visitation, the hour when He is building His church. The Father is bringing everything to a climax in Christ Jesus, to a oneness in relationship and fellowship that far surpasses everything that natural man can manufacture in his mind. If you want to follow those who have a mind religion without the reality of the power and presence of God in their midst, governed by man's control and man's ministry, you have that choice. God never removes that choice from you.

Paul said it in this wonderful way at the end of his life: "I press on to know the Lord" (Philippians 3:12). Although he had experienced God in many wonderful ways, at the end of his natural life Paul still pressed on to know God, even in the power of His resurrection. We need to know the resurrection power of the Spirit of God in our daily lives, and we need to press on to know His resurrection in reality at the end, when we will have new bodies. But God has quickened and made alive what we have right now, if we have believed Him. That is sufficient, so that His will may be accomplished in and through His body.

Let us not look to man's teachings, as good or as bad as they may be. Let us look to God, who will lead us into all truth. Just knowing a doctrine will never give you the ability even to do that doctrine! Only the Spirit of God can give us the ability to be sons of God. This is the time we choose. Will we let God be God, or will we settle for our own understanding? Will we know God in the power of His indwelling? As we hear the truth, we choose.

We cannot be satisfied by just knowing about God; we must experience God, having fellowship and a relationship with God. That is why God made man, and that is why He redeemed man by the great sacrifice He gave. May we move on to know God, using the scriptures as God has designed them to be used, and worshipping God in spirit and in truth.