



MOUNT MERRION FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[BELFAST NORTHERN IRELAND].



Pulpit Ministry of Mount Merrion Free Presbyterian Church

Lord's Day Morning 23rd March 2008.

"He That Hath Christ Hath Life."

Scripture Reading Col Ch 3:4

By. Rev. Paul Thompson.

The '*relationship of the Saints to God*' is expressed in scripture by various terms and descriptions, e.g. *Son's of God, Children of God, ransomed of the Lord, elect, God's Heritage* etc. This is what they now are because of redemption. The scriptures also employs various titles to describe what '*Christ has now become to believers*', I.e. how Christ now stands to them, what He has now become to them as a result of salvation. That is not a play on words. When we examine the doctrine of redemption, we discover that there is a change in man's relationship to God, yet redemption in another sense relates Christ to us. For example in 1Cor Ch1:30 Christ is said to be made unto the Christian, wisdom, sanctification and redemption. He is said elsewhere to be have become their *high priest, the captain of their salvation, advocate, mediator and redeemer* etc, Christ is all this to the Christian through salvation. Here in Colossians Ch3 Paul uses one such title to depict Christ in His relationship to the Church, (v4) '*Christ our Life.*' The context in which this title of Christ is found is that of spiritual resurrection. Paul very often reminds Christians of what they formerly were and of where they formerly were found. They were dead in sin, without Christ, without Hope and without God in this world [Eph Ch2:12], but now because of Christ they are made spiritually alive. Those in Christ have died to sin and are now hid in Christ. Christ has removed the deadness, he has caused in the words of John Owen, '*the death of death by His own death.*' Considering Christ as the Believers Life presents some striking implications.

1) That all those without Christ are dead.

All those to whom God intended to give eternal life in their pre-conversion state were dead, as all men are. Man naturally has no life. The word dead simply means '*lifeless*', the total privation of life. The question needs to be asked, why does the scripture speak of man being '*lifeless*', how did this take place? This loss of Spiritual life was the result of sin. Man in his pristine unfallen condition was spiritually alive, he enjoyed spiritual life (*it was his possession*). Man before the fall was a creature fully alive to God, both spiritually and physically. Adam had in his soul a natural gravitation towards and love for God. With the command of God not to eat of the tree of good and knowledge (which was a test of Adam's obedience and love for God) there was a promise attached that should Adam obey he would be brought into a state whereby it would be impossible to apostatise. Satan also promised eternal life, his promise of life was not based upon obedience to God but on disobedience. Satan told Adam that if he would disobey God and eat of the tree of good and evil he would live forever, he would be as God, "*Ye shall be as gods.*" Man listened to the lie of Satan. The rebellion of man really stands out when you understand that Adam went along with the lie of the devil who promised Adam at the end of his disobedience to God there would be eternal life, "*ye shall be as gods*" viz. on equality with God! Instead of man coming into possession of eternal life via disobedience, he was brought into bondage and subservience to Satan and sin. Man suffered deprivation - the Spiritual life of the soul was taken from man in that first transgression. Certainly the fall of man brought about physical death, which would result over a period of time, but spiritually man died instantly!!

That is why the scripture speaks of man being "*dead in trespasses and in sins.*" Eph Ch2:1. In that condition man remains because they are without Christ, they are not joined to Him. Paul actually tells the Ephesians that they were dead in trespasses and sins, and they remained dead for the reason given in v12, "*...at that time ye were without Christ...strangers to the covenants of promise...having no hope...without God in this world.*" Man's condition without Christ is one that is hopeless!! Unconverted, we cannot express how dead and lifeless you actually are, even though you think to the contrary! Sinners think they have life, they boast of life, yet they are dead, they have no perception of true life.

a) - Dead souls are loathsome they have nothing to offer. Because man is dead his condition before God is loathsome and putrid. In the physical realm there is nothing attractive about a corpse, after a few days it must be taken and buried out of sight. Death affords no beauty to man's physical frame. Natural man sees himself very often as being attractive to God, that surely there is something that God might see in him, yet here is how God views sinners as dead rotten corpses! Death in scripture indeed in the physical realm is always associated with that which is loathsome and vile. Lazarus in John Ch11:39, "*by this time he stinketh*" it is Christ that brings beauty to the soul, it is life that gives beauty to the individual.

*"The humiliation of Christ was necessary, to execute the purpose of God and the covenant engagements of Christ."
...John Brown of Haddington...*

b) - Dead souls have no spiritual Senses. Spiritually speaking, sinful man has no interest in Christ - he is void of all sense, he *sees not, hears not, feels not, does not speak, hear* - but why? Without God, without Christ the soul of the unregenerate man has no motion towards God or things spiritual. Take a sword and plunge it into the flesh of a corpse says Spurgeon and you find no response, place a large weight upon a dead man and he won't react or complain. If that is true of physical man, why is it then that with sinful man you can throw as it were the fires of hell in their faces, you can warn and present the anger of God that is kindled against them they respond not? It is because they are dead and senseless to things spiritual. He cannot act because he is dead, he cannot even try to please God, he cannot even want to obey God, all senses, all power, all ability is gone! What an awful state that man is in outside of Christ. 1John Ch5v12, "*He that hath the son hath life, but he that hath not the son, hath not life.*"

2) Spiritual Life is to be found alone in Christ.

Man greatest need is that his deadness be removed, that necessitates the impartation of spiritual life. Under this I want us to think of two points.

a) That Christ is exclusively life. Paul says here that Christ has given life to these Colossian believers, a life that imparted vitality and spiritual sensibility to their souls. "*Christ is our life*" (v4), in other words, we live because of Christ. Paul means much more than simply that Christ has given life to these believers, but that Christ actually was that life, His very essence is life! Why can we say that Christ is life? Turn to John Ch1:3, "*All things were made by him...*" It logically follows on John's statement that if Christ has created all things, and by him all things consist and continue, He then must be the fountain of life, the life giver! All life owes its existence to Christ (*the word Zoë incorporates both physical & spiritual*). Christ therefore is the embodiment of life. That was the testimony of Christ and others, Remember Christ's own words in John Ch14:6, "*I am the way the truth and the life no man cometh to the father but by me.*" In other words without the life that I alone give no man shall see God! That is exclusive language. Or the words of John in John Ch1:4, "*In him was life.*" Spiritual life that leads to God is found only in Christ, 1John Ch5:11, "*God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His son.*" Life that results in deadness being removed is found alone in Christ. That life is connected with Christ's resurrection, because He lives, ye shall live also [John Ch14:19]. He is the guarantee of or resurrection [John Ch15:20-21], 'Christ has become the firstfruits of them that slept. By man came also the resurrection of the dead; so God, in his great goodness and infinite wisdom has thought fit, and he has so ordered it, that it should be, that as the first man was the cause of, and brought death into the world, the second man should be the cause of the resurrection of life.

b) That it is exclusively Christ's prerogative to give life.

It is Christ's prerogative and purpose to give life to dead sinners. That is why Christ the second Adam came in the flesh, "*I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.*" He did not come merely to offer and present life, He came to give life (*by providing life through His life and death*). The scriptures are replete with evidence that this is so. I can think of no other thought that so magnifies the sovereignty and Lordship of Christ in His redemptive work, that it is solely within the power of Christ to give life to dying sinners. John Ch17:2, "*(Father) Thou hast given him (me) power over all flesh, that (I) he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given (me) Him.*"

It is Christ who is the author of this life, it is He who is the cause of it, it was merited by Him and it will be Christ who will bestow it. "*I give unto them (my sheep) eternal life...*" remember Paul's words in Romans Ch6:23, "*The gift of God is eternal life...through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" It is by and through Jesus Christ that eternal life is given.

c) This Life Results in Deadness being Removed. We have emphasised that man without Christ is thoroughly corrupt and defunct spiritually. In such a condition man is powerless to turn to Christ for life (*even under the most persuasive preaching and threats of God's wrath*). My words cannot reach the soul, unregenerate, my

“*The Angel rolled away the stone from Jesus' tomb, not to let the living Lord out, but to let unconvinced outsiders in.*”
...Donald Grey Barnhouse...

words at best are falling on spiritually deaf ears. How then is death destroying life given to men? What is required is the Holy Spirit's application of that life to your soul. Only the effectual call of God's Holy Spirit can reach your soul, only the regenerating power of the gospel can enliven your dead soul. The Holy Spirit in regeneration opens the eyes of the soul, He enlightens the mind and causes the soul to live spiritually. By purchasing the Holy Spirit Christ purchased regeneration for us, that was the objective of His suffering and death Titus Ch2:14, "*He gave himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people...*" In securing life he assured regeneration (*all deadness will be eradicated*). In giving life, light is given to men John Ch1:4, "*The life was the light of men.*"

That kind of language should drive you to Christ, without Christ you have no hope, in Christ alone there is hope, he exclusively bestows that which man needs to bring him to God.

Conversion is the impartation of life to dead sinners. The holy Spirit applies life in Christ.

3) That the Spiritual Life imparted to Sinners can never totally and finally die.

This life which has been imparted to men is said to be hid in Christ, "*our life is hid with Christ in God.*" This life brings us into union with one who can never perish. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. *Because I live, ye shall live also* John Ch14v19. In order for a one who has received life from Christ to die, Christ must cease to exist and live, that can never happen. Those to whom Christ gives life he says "*I give unto them (my sheep) eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*" [John Ch10:28] The 'man' in view is the strongman (Satan). He can never pluck one of the saints from the hands of a Sovereign Christ.

A word to the unconverted, if this spiritual deadness and death that has overcome man be not removed, it will most certainly lead to eternal death, may men be given the grace to flee to Christ. Amen.

By. Paul Thompson.

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."

Hebrews 10:16