

FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE

Sin and death are a sad fact of life. Even the best of people sin and die. Some people seek to solve these problems materialistically. They seek to solve the problem of sin by behavior modification, and they seek to solve the problem of death by genetic engineering. They have some success in changing behavior, but no success in preventing death. God is the Lord of righteousness, and the Lord of life. He alone is able to put an end to sin and death. He alone is able to change the nature of man, and to give him eternal life. After all, God is the creator and sustainer of life. He gives life, and He takes it away.

When the first man, Adam, sinned against God, as He had warned Adam He would do, punished Adam with death. Adam, separated from God, and the life that is in Him, died. Adam had no spiritual vitality, and so was bound always to sin; he had no physical vitality, and so was bound finally to leave his body. This was the condition of Adam, and every one of his descendants, which is to say, all mankind, are born in the same condition. They may change their behavior, but they cannot change their natures; they may prolong their lives, but they cannot prevent their deaths. Worse still, after they die, they will forever suffer torment for their sins. Man's condition is miserable.

God loves mankind, and so He wishes to save them from sin and death. So, He sent His Son, His only-begotten Son, into the world to save them. God is righteous, and so He will not tolerate sin men's sin; but He is also merciful, and wishes to forgive men's sins. God will not forgive men's sins if they continue in rebellion. If a man would have God's forgiveness, then He must repent of His sins, and humbly cry out to God to forgive him. God is almighty, but He cannot save by mere declaration. It is contrary to His nature to be unjust, and so He cannot remit men's sins without justice, without atonement. So, He forgives their sins because His Son has atoned for them. God sent His Son into the world to atone for men's sins.

Jesus proclaimed that He is the Son of God come into the world, and that men ought to turn to Him for forgiveness and life. He said that the Father had committed to Him authority over life and death, so that all men might honor the Son as they honor the Father. Jesus gives life to some, and He judges to rest. Jesus proved His claim by many miracles; yet, men, because of their sinful natures, refused to believe in Him. Men must believe in Jesus to be saved from their sins; yet, because they are sinful, they will not believe in Him. In fact, the men of His time sought to kill Him. This is a problem that only God in His wisdom and power could solve; and He solved it by making men spiritually alive so that they might believe in Jesus. Jesus taught that, if anyone believed Him, and believed the Father who sent Him, then that one would have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. That one would, upon believing, pass from death into life.

Jesus told some unbelieving Jews who wished to kill Him:

The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.
(John 5:25–27)

Jesus said that the time was coming, indeed, was at hand, when He would give spiritual life to those that are spiritually dead. He would open their eyes and ears so that they would see and hear the truth that He spoke, and would believe Him. As Jesus called Lazarus from his material tomb, so he calls men from their spiritual tombs. This is what Saint John, in his revelation, called, "the first resurrection." (Revelation 20:5, 6) God the Father

has life in Himself; He is the creator of all things, and has the power to give life to the dead. He has given to the Son to have life in Himself, so that the Son may give spiritual life to whomever He wishes.

Jesus said further:

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:28, 29)

A time was coming, not soon, but surely, when He would give physical life to those who are physically dead. As Lazarus, when he heard Jesus calling him, came forth from the tomb, so will all men at Jesus's Second Advent, when they hear Jesus calling them, rise from the dead. There will be this difference between them all, however: those whom Jesus made spiritually alive will have done good works; those whom he left spiritually dead will not. Those who will have done good works are those whom Jesus will raise to eternal life, to live with Him in righteousness and bliss for ever and ever. The rest He will leave in eternal misery.

Let us thank the Lord that He has given us spiritual life. Let us be glad that one day He will give us physical life. Let us do good works as those whom the Lord has given life.