

**Articles and Sermons :: THE CHRISTIAN'S SECRET TO A HAPPY LIFE-Hanna Whitall Smith**

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IS IT SCRIPTURAL?

The potential for a happy abundant Christian life is available to all who would make Jesus the Lord of their lives, yet there are many Christians whose lives lack the joy and fullness of a truly happy life. A keen observer once said to me, "You Christians seem to have a religion that makes you miserable. You are like a man with a headache. He does not want to get rid of his head, but it hurts him to keep it. You cannot expect outsiders to seek earnestly for anything so uncomfortable." Then, for the first time I saw that the religion of Christ ought to be, and was meant to be, something that would make its possessors happy, not miserable. I began then and there to ask the Lord to show me the secret of a happy Christian life.

I will try to present what I have learned about this secret in the following pages. All of God's children, I am convinced, feel instinctively in their moments of divine illumination, that a life of inward rest and outward victory is their inalienable birthright. Can you not remember the shout of triumph your souls gave when you first became acquainted with the Lord Jesus, and had a glimpse of His mighty saving power? How sure you were of victory, then! How easy it seemed to be more than conquerors through Him that loved you! Under the leadership of a Captain who had never been defeated in battle, how could you dream of defeat! And yet, how different the experience has been for many of you. Your victories have been few and brief, your defeats many and disastrous. You have not lived as you feel children of God ought to live. You have had, perhaps, a clear understanding of doctrinal truths, but you have not come into possession of their life and power. You have rejoiced in your knowledge of the things revealed in the Scriptures, but have not had a living realization of the things themselves, consciously felt in the soul. Christ is believed in, talked about, and served. However, He is not known as the very life of the soul, abiding there forever, and revealing Himself there continually in His beauty.

You have found Jesus as your Saviour from the penalty of sin, but you have not found Him as your Saviour from its power. You have carefully studied the Holy Scriptures and have gathered much precious truth from them. You have trusted that this would feed and nourish your spiritual life. But in spite of it all, your souls are starving and dying within you. You cry out in secret, again and again, for that bread and water of life which you see promised in the Scriptures to all believers. In the very depths of your heart, you know that your experience is not a Scriptural experience. As an old writer said, your religion is "merely talk whereas, the early Christians enjoyed, possessed, and lived it." Your hearts have weakened within you, as day after day, and year after year, your early visions of triumph have grown dimmer. You have accepted that the best you can expect from your religion is a life of alternate failure and victory one hour sinning and the next repenting, and then beginning again, only to fail and repent again.

But is this all? Did the Lord Jesus only have this in His mind when He laid down His precious life to deliver you from your bondage to sin? Did He only propose this partial deliverance? Did He intend to leave you struggling under a weary consciousness of defeat and discouragement? When all those declarations were made concerning His coming, and the work He was to accomplish, did they only refer to a limited experience of victorious living? Was there a hidden clause in each promise that was meant to deprive it of its complete fulfilment? Did "delivered us out of the hand of our enemies" (Luke 1:74) mean that they should still have dominion over us? Did "always causeth us to triumph" (2 Corinthians 2:14) mean that we were only to triumph sometimes? Did being made "more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37) mean constant defeat and failure? Does "able...to save them to the uttermost" (Hebrews 7:25) mean the meagre salvation we see manifested among us now? Can we believe that the Saviour, who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, could possibly be satisfied with the many meagre Christian lives in the Church today? The Bible tells us that "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Can we ever imagine that this is beyond His power, and that He finds Himself unable to accomplish the thing He was manifested to do?

#### Complete Deliverance From Sin

Concentrate in the very beginning on this one to ask me to save you, now, in this life, from the power and dominion of sin, and to make you more than conquerors through His power. If you doubt this, search your Bible and make note of every announcement or declaration concerning the purposes and object of His death on the cross. You will be astonished to find how full they are. His victory delivers us from our sins, our bondage, and our defilement. There is no scripture that says

upports only a limited and partial deliverance. Yet, many Christians unfortunately are satisfied with just that!

Consider some scriptural references on this subject. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and announced the coming birth of the Saviour, he said, "and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1 :2 1 ) .

When Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost" (Luke 1:67) at the birth of his son and "prophesied," he declared that God had visited his people in order to fulfil the promise and the oath He had made them. The promise was "That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74,75).

When Peter was preaching on the porch of the temple to the wondering Jews, he said, "Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26).

When Paul was telling the Ephesian Church the wondrous truth that Christ had so loved them as to give Himself for them, he went on to declare that His purpose in doing so was "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5: 26, 27)

When Paul was seeking to instruct Titus, his own son after the common faith, concerning the grace of God, he declared that the object of that grace was to teach us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12). He adds, as the reason for this, that Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). When Peter was urging Christians to be holy and Christlike, he told them that "even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 3:21,22). He adds, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

In Ephesians, when Paul contrasts the walk suitable for a Christian with the walk of an unbeliever, he presents the truth in Jesus as being this, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22,24).

In the sixth chapter of Romans, Paul forever answered the question regarding a child of God who continues in sin, and showed how utterly foreign it was to the whole spirit and aim of the salvation of Jesus. He brings up our death and resurrection with Christ as an unanswerable argument for our practical deliverance from sin, and says, "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6: 24) . He adds, "knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).

### Sin Contrary To God

In the declarations concerning the purpose of the death of Christ, far more mention is made of a present salvation from sin than of a future salvation in a heaven beyond. This plainly shows God's estimate of the relative importance of these two things.

Dear Christians, do you receive the testimony of Scripture on this matter? The same crucial questions that troubled the Church in Paul's day are troubling it now. We must consider two things. First, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Romans 6: 1 ) . And second, "Do we then make void the law through faith?" (Romans 3:31). Will our answer to these questions be Paul's emphatic "God forbid," and his triumphant statements that, instead of making it void, "we establish the law"? Romans 8:3-4 tells us "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Can we suppose that the holy God who hates sin in the sinner is willing to tolerate it in the Christian? Can we really believe that He has even arranged the plan of salvation in such a way as to make it impossible for those who are saved from

the guilt of sin to find deliverance from its power?

Dr. Chalmers says it well, "Sin is that scandal which must be rooted out from the great spiritual household over which God rejoices...It would indeed be strange to believe that sin, so hateful to God, caused death, and yet believe that sin should be permitted to continue. It would be very strange that what was previously the object of destroying vengeance should now become the object of toleration. Now that the penalty is removed, do you think it is possible that the unchangeable God has given up His aversion to sin so that ruined and redeemed man may now indulge, under the new arrangement, in that which under the old destroyed him? Does not the God who loved righteousness and hated iniquity six thousand years ago still love righteousness and hate iniquity?

"We can now walk before God in peace and graciousness. How can we believe that God would be allied with a persistent sinner? How will we, recover from such a catastrophe, continue that which first involved us in it? The cross of Christ, by the same mighty and decisive stroke with which it took the curse of sin away from us, also surely takes away the power and the love of sin."

Dr. Chalmers and many other holy men of his generation, and our own generation, have united in declaring that the redemption accomplished for us by our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary is a redemption from the power of sin as well as from its guilt. Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

A Quaker clergyman of the seventeenth century says: "There is nothing so contrary to God as sin, and God will not tolerate sin ruling man, His masterpiece." When we consider how God's mighty power destroys that which is contrary to Him, who can believe that the devil must always stand and prevail? I believe it is inconsistent with true faith for people to be Christians and yet to believe that Christ, the eternal Son of God, to whom all power in heaven and earth is given, will tolerate sin and the devil having dominion.

#### Power Over Sin

But you will say that no man can redeem himself by his own power, and no man can live without sin. Amen to that. But if men tell us that God's power cannot help us and redeem us out of sin, we cannot accept it!

Would you agree if I should tell you that God puts forth His power to help keep us from sinning but the devil hinders Him? Would you believe that it is impossible for God to do it, because the devil does not like it? Would you believe that it is impossible that anyone should be free from sin because the devil has such power over them that God cannot cast him out? This is not so yet hasn't this been preached? This kind of teaching says that although God's power is available, it is impossible to get rid of sin because the devil has rooted sin deeply in man's nature. Isn't man God's creature, and can't God make man new and cast sin out of him? I do agree that sin is deeply rooted in man. Yet Christ Jesus has entered so deeply into the root of man's nature that He has received power to destroy the devil and his works, and to recover and redeem man into righteousness and holiness. Otherwise, it is not true that "He is able to save. . .to the uttermost (all) that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25). We must throw away the Bible if we say that it is impossible for God to deliver man out of sin.

When our friends are in captivity in foreign lands, we pay money for their redemption. But we would not pay our money if they were still kept in chains. One would think himself cheated to pay so much money for their redemption and make the bargain that although one be said to be redeemed and be called a redeemed captive, he must still wear his chains. This refers to bodies, but I am now speaking of souls. Christ must be my redemption and rescue me from captivity. Am I a prisoner anywhere? Yes, "Verily, verily, whosoever committeth sin, saith Christ, is the servant of sin." (John 8:34). If you have sinned, you are a slave, a captive who must be redeemed out of captivity.

You may say, "Who will pay a price for me? I am poor and have nothing. I cannot redeem myself. Who will pay a price for me?" There is One who has paid the price. What good news! He is Jesus, the Redeemer. He will free you from captivity.

Yet some say we must abide in sin as long as we live. What! Must we never be delivered? Must this crooked heart and perverse will always remain? Must I be a believer and yet have no faith that I can be sanctified and live a holy life? Can I never have mastery, can I never have victory over sin? Must it prevail over me as long as I live? What sort of a Redeemer then, is this, or what benefit do I have in this life of redemption? Ask God to open the eyes of your understanding by His Spirit, that you may know, "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand

and in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:19,20). And when you have begun to have some faint glimpses of this power, I earn to look completely away from your own weakness. Put your case into His hands and trust Him to deliver you.

"When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, and shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies to save you" (Deuteronomy 20: 14).