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The Indwelling Christ - by Malcom Smith, on: 2016/5/29 8:46

How does the zoe, the life of Christ Himself, actually become manifest in our lives? We know that to try and imitate it in our own strength is utter despair. But then, how does He live through us?

One day a number of years ago, I sat in a diner pondering these great truths. I asked myself. "How can Christ, the zoe-a gape of God, live in me?" Just then the waitress brought me a cup of hot water with a tea bag on the side. I began dipping the tea bag into the water, watching it turn color as it received the strength of the tea.

Suddenly, it dawned on me that I had just "infused" the tea into the water. The strength and taste of the tea had been released from the leaves into the colorless, tasteless water. Just laying the tea bag against the cup would have accomplished nothing - there had to be an infusion.

I realized then that I was completely incapable of reproducing the life of Christ within myself, even as the water was helpless to turn itself into tea. If I was to live His life, then He must come and live it within me. His life must be infused into my spirit.

As the Apostle Paul says: "I have strength for all things in Christ who empowers me - I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses inner strength into me..." (Phil. 4:13 AMP)

If the resurrected Jesus is going to be known and tasted by the world today, it is not as a result of man trying to be like Him - but of Him being expressed through our weakness! The tea will always be locked up in the bag until released through the medium of the water.

The fusion of the tea and water is so complete that we no longer call it water - but tea. Yet the tea is still in the bag! Christ is in us - our life is His life - yet He has not become us and we have not become Him. We are forever distinct, and forever one. This is the miracle that takes place when a person comes to Christ.

Rejecting The Source Of Life

But how do we get that life into our own weak lives?

The answer religion gives to this is always in terms of something we do. In my youth, I asked that question of many pastors and always the answer was a variation on the same idea: To have the flow of the life of God, one must set aside time to pray and read the Bible on a regular basis.

To say that the life of Christ flows in and through our lives because we spend a daily hour in devotion is to turn prayer and Bible study into a work of the flesh. It is to make the activity one more rung on the ladder to God. How dedicated must a person be before the life begins to flow? What level of being "sold out to God" must we be at before the first trickle of the zoe begins to come?

The Pharisees pored over the Scriptures and said prayers believing they would somehow tap into God's life, but Jesus plainly told them that in so doing they were missing the only source of life - Christ Himself.

"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life." (John 5:39,40)

The Rest Of Faith

That brings us to the very heart of the Good News - it is faith and not works! In the New Testament, to accept the Gospel was seen to be an obedience of faith. "May Christ through your faith actually dwell - settle down, abide, make His permanent home - in your hearts." (Eph. 3:17 AMP)

It is at this point of understanding that a believer, burning out in his efforts to please God, moves from exhaustion to rest.

Tired and wearied with his struggle to perform acceptably for God through the disciplines and dedications of religion, he hears the grace of God and the Holy Spirit makes it alive in his heart.

Like the returning son in Jesus' story, most of us see very little of what God desires to give us. We are perfectly happy to come home at the level of a hired servant, feeling that the slave position is appropriate for us. It is only after we have come home that we discover the Father's grace is infinitely greater than we had ever dreamed.

We finally realize that Christianity is not a formula, but the Person of Jesus Himself. When we understand who He is, then everything begins to fall in place. We no longer try to live for God, we live from Him who is the source of all life. The revelation of Christ living within has rescued us from religious ladder climbing.

The Exchanged Life

In the last few years, I have spoken with hundreds of burned-out, disillusioned people who have prayed and looked for their lives to be changed. However, the emphasis of the Scriptures is not so much on change - but exchange!

When a believer burns out, it's his own human resources that have been exhausted. God's infinite zoe can never be depleted. If He lives in each of us and is our life, then spiritual burnout is caused by the believer's failure to rest in and receive the continual flow of His life.

When a branch burns, the flames feed on the gases that are locked up in the wood. As these gases are spent, the wood is reduced to ashes and the flames flicker and die. But there was once a bush that burned, and it was not consumed by the flames. As it blazed, the flames were not feeding on the resources of the bush; it was only the vehicle that contained and expressed the fire.

The flame and radiant light that came from the bush was the uncreated life, the zoe, of God who is light. When the presence of God departed from the bush, the leaves were green and the branches as moist as they had been before. It had burned, but none of its resources had been drawn upon.

The Christian life is not living in our own strength and resources, but from the infinite Christ who lives within those who believe. All human strength will come to an end sooner or later, leaving each of us with a charred, burned-out life. But His strength knows no end.

"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For, behold, those who are far from Thee will perish... But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge...." (Psalm 73:25-28)

Re: The Indwelling Christ - by Malcom Smith - posted by dohzman (), on: 2016/5/29 13:04

Long time since I heard that name! I used to enjoy Malcom's ministry many many years ago, the early days of my Christian experience. Good to see he is still around.