

What is Life?

Part I—Life is Personal

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (I John 5:11,12).

The Word of God makes it clear that life is not only by or through Christ, but Christ is life, itself. *“In Him was life; and the life was the light of men”* (John 1:4). *“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you”* (John 6:53). *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6). Life cannot be apart from Christ.

Let us learn a lesson from natural law. “There is no life without antecedent life.” All life comes from some previous life. The difference between the mineral kingdom, in natural science, and the vegetable and animal kingdoms is life. A rock can never become a plant, unless the plant applies its life to the rock. When the plant sends its roots into the soil and takes in mineral elements from it, then the minerals partake of life. In the process of the generation of life, the life of the father and mother is applied to produce life. Christ told Nicodemus that the entry into the Kingdom of God is by birth—the application of the life of Christ. As we understand this we understand that Christianity is more than the belief of truth; it is more than reformed habits; it is more than the acceptance of Christ as a person—it is the receiving of the life of Christ.

In natural science, the rock and the plant are both made up of the same kind of atomic structure; both are governed by the same laws; both may have the same physical properties and resemble each other as in the case of petrified forests, but one has life and the other has not. Often a Christian and a non-Christian will bear many resemblances. Both may be of high moral standards; both may attend church; both may engage in zealous activity, but the difference is life. One has the life of Christ and the other has not. One has only ascribed to the doctrine, but the other has received the gift of life.

Man in original creation has this life as a gift from God. It was the “breath of life” which God breathed into him, making him a living soul. This the animals did not have. In the Fall, man forfeited this life. He did not forfeit existence—he forfeited life in unity with God. Now in salvation, not only is the penalty of Adam’s sin removed, but life is restored. The penalty was removed for all men. *“And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (I John 2:2). Life, however, must be experienced personally. Though all men are free from the penalty, salvation comes only to those who personally receive the gift of life.

Paul tells the Corinthians, with whom he had a good deal of difficulty, *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* (II Corinthians 13:5). And to the Galatians, who were courting works and traditions, he said, *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you”* (Galatians 4:19).

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