



The Life of Christ

A Problem

The connection of these words with the former verses briefly stands thus. The Holy Ghost, having decried the law as that which is utterly unable to give life, and set up the justification of a sinner only from God's free grace, in making over unto him the righteousness of Christ, having I say asserted this great fundamental doctrine of our Christian religion, wherein the Galatians were begun to be tainted, he then comes to answer the common cavil, which (not only the Papists, but) too many among ourselves do charge this doctrine with, namely, that it is but a door to all licentiousness, and does take off the reins from any man, and gives him an occasion to be bold in wickedness; for if our righteousness cannot justify us, nor our unrighteousness condemn us, but the righteousness of Christ is accepted for us, and in Him we are complete without any thing of our own, who would not take liberty to indulge himself in such fleshly courses as are agreeable to his nature?

Arguments Against False Reasoning

Now against this the apostle opposes several arguments to prove that this response cannot be a consequence of this doctrine to a man that rightly understands it. Justification by free grace will never be a temptation to a man to a sinful life.

One argument is that all Paul's ministry tended to beat down a wicked life, and do they think he would come to build up that which he had pulled down? That were an absurd thing.

Second, the very end of our justification by Christ is quite contrary to it, for, saith Paul, 'through the law I am dead indeed to the law, but it is that I might live to God'; as if he should have said, It is true that the right understanding of the impossibility of a sinner's keeping the law will beat down in him all thoughts of ever obtaining any life by the law, he will be dead as to look for justification or acceptance that way; but it is that he might live to God, that is the very end of it, that he might live to God; that is another argument, and that being the very end that God aims at, it is impossible that the quite contrary of it should flow from the Lord's own appointment.

Third, every man that partakes of Jesus Christ is crucified with Him; and Paul instances in himself, 'I am crucified with Christ.' When Jesus Christ hung upon the cross, He there by virtue of His death did kill sin; and by virtue of His resurrection, He has opened a way to a new life. When I partake of Christ, I have an interest in this; I die with Him and am buried with Him; therefore, it is impossible that looking for life by Christ should make a man live a wicked life.

Fourth, that which Paul brings in by way of answer to a tacit objection, 'Are you crucified? Do we not see you are

alive?’ ‘Yes, I live indeed, but in truth more properly I may say, “It is not I that live, but it is Christ Jesus that lives in me;” by virtue of my interest in Him, my whole life flows from Him, and the life that I live in this life, that is, in this fleshly tabernacle, it is the life of Christ; and the way how I live, it is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.’

Two Important Doctrines

So, I have brought you to my text; and in the words (without any further interpretation, save what you shall have in my handling the doctrine) there are two doctrines clearly laid down.

First, *every soul that has an interest in Christ, while he is in this world, it is Christ that lives in him.* While we live in this flesh, in this world, the life that we live, it is Christ’s life, Christ lives it. When we accept of Christ, we do not only believe in Him to be saved by Him when we go out of this world, and trust all the days of our life, that when this life ends, He has a better life for us in store. That is not all. When we accept Jesus Christ, we so accept Him that His life is communicated to us, and while we are in this world we live that life. That is the first doctrine, that all the Lord’s people, while they live in this world, live Christ’s life.

Second, *the manner of their living this life in this world is by faith.* We shall live the life of Christ to eternity, but when that moment of eternity comes, faith shall have no hand in it; but the life we now live, while we are in the flesh, it is the grace of faith by which we live it.

So that I may express my meaning, take an infant. As soon as ever the body and soul are joined together, it is made a living soul, it is the life of a man that it lives. But

while it is in the mother's womb, the manner of living is by the navel; the navel-string conveys all to it. When it comes into the world, when the string is cut, there is no more use of it, and then the child lives another way. So, while we are in this world, though we live the life of Christ, yet faith is (as it were) our navel-string; it draws and receives all from Him. When we are transplanted into another world, that way of living ceases, and we enjoy God in Christ immediately.

These two doctrines lie in the text. The first of them, with the Lord's assistance, I shall endeavour in this sermon to make it clear to you, and to make some use of it.

Two Kinds of Life in the Bible

Now to make a little way to it, that all the saints live Christ's life, the life of Christ, I would not have you expect that I would spend any part of my time in a philosophical discourse about the nature of life in general. No, let this suffice, that you shall find in the Scripture a twofold life of man spoken about.

First, there is the natural life that we all live, which we receive from Adam. I speak not here of the corruption of our nature. The first man was a living soul, that is, he was an animal man, a man endowed with a reasonable soul. All that come from him have that life which is nothing but the union of the body and soul together. Those motions and operations that are in us are acted in us by virtue of that union, and this the Scripture calls the natural man, the natural life, the animal man. As one should say, the man endowed with a soul, the happiness of whom is to enjoy a soul-life, and this life is sometimes called the present life, sometimes called the bodily life, the life of man. This life, all who proceed from Adam do live, in all ages and parts of the world. To the upholding and beautifying and accommodating of this life

are all men's labours and their studies. The good things of this world, they are naturally all subservient to it, everything parted with rather than part with it. *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath, will he give for this life.* No one doubts that there is such a life,

Second, the Scripture speaks of another life, and my text leads to it. Paul speaks of another life, which is a spiritual life, which flows from the second Adam. Even as the first Adam was a living soul and communicates a living soul to all that come from him, so the second Adam is a quickening spirit, and communicates a quickening spirit to all that come from Him. That is the life that my text leads me to speak of, and this life the Scripture sometimes calls the new creature, sometimes calls the life of Christ, as in my text, sometimes calls the life of God, not only because God is the author of it (for so He is of the other life), but because (in a sound sense) it is the life that He Himself lives, their life being but an image of his life. This is called eternal life; this is that that is the end and fruit of all Christ's undertakings. Now this life, this spiritual life, this life of Christ, this new life, this eternal life, it is that that I now come to endeavour to demonstrate to you, that all the Lord's people live this life while they are in this world.

Five Details to Note

Now there are two things that my purpose is to treat upon in the doctrinal part of it, before I come to the application. Before I come to either of them, I crave your leave to set down five propositions that are preparatory to it. I will not handle them, for doing so would take up too much of the time, but to name them is requisite. It shall be a kind of inlet or preparation to it.

First, this spiritual life that the saints do live, no natural man has any real understanding of it. He does not know the things of God, nor can he, they are spiritually discerned. Therefore, if it should prove a riddle to many of you, you may have cause to suspect your condition, but not to suspect the truth of the doctrine.

Second, I premise that men may be in the church, live in the church, and have admirable learning and admirable abilities to judge of all other things that fall under human capacity, yet not be able to look upon this any otherwise than as a mere whimsy or a dark riddle. Nicodemus was a doctor, a Pharisee, a ruler and an honest man according to the principles he had been trained up under, yet when he comes to Christ to know the way to heaven, He tells him that all his other righteousness was nothing. If he be not born again, and have a new life, he could never come into the kingdom of God. 'What is this?' saith he. It was as dark to him as if he should enter into his mother's womb and be born again when he is an old man. Therefore, think not that if you be scholars or wise men or learned men, you have the capacity for understanding it, though the vulgar cannot. No, if the Lord give you not a share in it, you will never understand it.

Third, I premise this, that there is a double knowledge of this life. One is only a notional knowledge, the theory, to be able to conceive that there is such a thing, and to be able to talk of it, and to reason about it. There is another knowledge of it that is experimental, practical, real and convincing. The notional knowledge, I confess, by the common light that accompanies the ministry of the Word, may break in on some men; but for the experimental, real, inward knowledge of it, they will still be strangers to it.