



S3. So Complete a Salvation Series

S3.E5. The Soul of Man (2) – Unto Full Stature

[Episodes in this series, *So Complete a Salvation*, should be followed in sequence as the Episodes are built upon one another.]

Capstone Scripture

There is a capstone scripture that makes this crowning point to the salvation of the soul and its union with Christ abundantly clear,

*Gal. 2.19-21 “**19**For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. **20**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. **21**I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”*

The introductory verse, “**19**For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God,” brings to my mind a very dear friend that introduced me to this passage of Scripture. He has long since gone to be with the Lord, but his life is yet a testimony. In like manner to the apostle Paul who wrote these words to and his once bondage to the Jewish Law, Albert was raised in a church religiously bound to “Christian legalism.” Christian legalism is a term used to describe a religious system that emphasizes obedience to rules and regulations as a means of salvation, or at least a requirement for salvation. This false doctrine claims that justification, or the righteousness of a Christian, is not obtained by grace and through faith alone, but rather by obedience to certain commandments and rituals—there is a wanting to establish our standing before God by our own achievements in obeying the law and doing good works.

The Law of the Old Testament **on the prophetic side** was perfect for it undoubtedly pointed to Christ. However, **on the moral side** the Law held a standard of righteousness no one, not even the highest of high priests, could obtain. Sin was made known to Jews through the law and the need for a savior was made obvious because of their inability to keep the Law. So too, my good friend Albert tried as he may to control his character—his temper, attitudes, selfish actions, religious devotion, and so on, but grew in increasing frustration that any sense of obedience did not bring any change in character or any degree of deliverance from the “old man of sin.” Then one day it all became abundantly clear to him, that a life lived in union with Christ is presented as being righteous before God. Legalism brought him no closer to God; but it is obtained “in Christ.”

Albert would quote Gal. 2.20 *"I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me,...* with almost a heavy groaning from within because this verse of scripture delivered him from all the bondage of legalism and set him free to enjoy a new life in Christ, a life of rest and peace. In Christ he (his old man) became dead to the law, to legalism, to commandments, to rituals and all that religion entails; but then he (his new man) became alive to God and to the glory of His presence. Gal. 2.20 is Albert's legacy, but not his alone, but to all who are quickened by its revelation. It begins...

I have been crucified with Christ – This single bit of truth alone is fathoms deeper than any thought of simple belief in Christ, or of water baptism in His name. It is not somehow imitating His death, going through the motions, but is by faith anticipating an inward working of the cross of Christ, a belief that there is a power in the cross and Jesus' death that we now "identify with" by faith. In this act of faith is a warding off the power of sin and worldly enticements; and as we become more passive in life, a new life progressively arises from within, which is the life of Christ. As Jesus experienced death only to find simultaneously a resurrection to a new life, so too the believer spiritually follows the same course, which is a spiritual resurrection into newness of life by faith in "co-crucifixion in Christ." The next clause...

It is no longer I who live – This inner death affects my soul only in so much as light is now displacing its darkness, but I am yet alive not only on this side of heaven to all that I hold dear and cherish, but even more so to the other spiritual side of heaven to where I am alive to God in Christ Jesus and awakened to the entire realm of the Spirit. My soul is more alive than ever before. It is however, no longer the old natural man in me, dominating and wanting to control me, but a new man is arisen within. My relationships with others become more endearing and less controlling, having empathy with them only wanting their well-being. There is a simultaneous desire to serve the Lord to the fullest in any calling He may choose for me. Continuing to the next clause...

But Christ lives in me – The new life is the life of the indwelling Spirit of Christ casting out old things, things no longer desired, things that actually bring death to my soul; but then a Christ that makes alive a soul that once was in death, alienated from God and all the glory of heaven. When we lose "our old self" in death we gain "our new self" in life. His abiding in us does not destroy the soul but heightens it, connecting the glory of God in the spirit to the realm of the world in which we live. It is to the extent that we, as it is written, *"may be partakers of the divine nature."* (2 Pet. 1.4) This nature rectifies relationships, redefines life's goals, and sets a greater focus on God and His Kingdom. The verse continues...

The life I now live in the flesh – I Now live! This is now my new condition as a true Christian as opposed to the cold condition prior to being found "in Christ." 2 Cor. 5.17-19 comes alive and confirms the word of this new life,

"¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

This word confirms that I am altogether a new creation in Christ, my past ego-centric life of being alienated from God and overly alive to “self” is passed and a new life has begun. All things have become new, not to the extent that I had begun reading the Bible and going to church, but what I am, my present being alive; it is my soul living in this body has become alive to a new way of living and loving. In Christ I am now reconciled to God in a living relationship, and that word of *reconciliation* is now given to me to witness to others. Gal. 2.20 continues...

I live by faith in the Son of God – When I drive my car across a bridge, I believe that bridge will support my vehicle and I will safely cross over the chasm beneath. And this is having a faith in man and his abilities to create something substantial—which may not always be the case for man repeatedly proves such complete reliance in man’s ability can be fatal. However, my faith in Christ is not based upon the ability of man but upon the Divine power of God to be faithful and to deliver me across the chasm of life and bring me to Himself... in His Son. This faith is not an independent act where one may say, “I believed and therefore I am saved,” but this faith is the entire atmosphere in which we live and breathe. From this point on in life I am that branch attached to the vine of Christ through which the essence of His life flows into me, sustaining me; and the Father is my keeper, pruning and caring for me to bring forth much fruit to God. (Jn. 15.1-8)

I have a very close friend in India who loves to make his tea steeped in hot water, special tea leaves and other herbs, with some milk; I really enjoy his tea. And my friend is also steeped in faith, being soaked in the word of God and the flavor of Christ is extracted. Thus, we live by faith; it is a condition of life without which we wither on the vine, remaining unsteeped in Christ. The verse continues,

Who loved me – Jesus Christ died for the whole world, but each individual must act alone in his own faith. It is a truth that God has no grandchildren brought into the faith by their parents, but only children individually born of His Spirit. Each believer has a right to appropriate Christ’s death and identify it to himself. The death of Christ was prompted by love, not for some abstract idea of humanity, but a love for men, women, and children as individuals. There is a very powerful scripture to lay hold of, Eph. 3.19, it is part of a prayer of Paul for each and every believer, and that is...

“to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

The first key to understanding this verse is in the word “*know*.” This word, “*ginosko*” in the Greek, implies a kind of knowledge that is gained through experience or having a personal relationship to what is to be known. It often denotes an intimate knowledge gained through a relationship with someone or something, as opposed to mere intellectual knowledge. For example *ginosko* is used in Lk. 1.34, “*And Mary (a virgin) said to the angel, ‘how will this be since I do not know (relating to sexual intimacy) a man?’*” I could read about the Grand Canyon in the USA or of the Taj Mahal in India but that pales to visiting the sites in firsthand experiences.

To know the love of Christ in this matter is not intellectually, as if by mere intellect. We could perhaps write a volume on the love of Christ, but to come into the intimate relationship with Him is something that will transform your soul. The second key to understanding this verse is in the word “*love*.” The word, “*agape*” in the Greek, **is not** based on emotions or feelings but

is actually a decisive act of the will—which is chiefly characterized by a commitment to the well-being of others. It is the highest form of love, most often associated with the love of God for humanity and the kind of love believers are to have for one another—a commitment to the well-being of others. A soul fixated on this *agape* love relationship is simultaneously being filled with the fullness of God. The apostle John speaks of this love relationship; all uses of the word love is *agape love*,

1 Jn. 4.8 *“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”*

1 Jn. 4.16 *“And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”*

The natural love of the soul is Gk. *phileo* love which is an emotion, a love of feelings towards another, a love which is most often self-centered, based upon some form of affection, and is all too often temporal, for it is a love that changes with circumstance. But *agape* love is imparted into the soul in Christ, and is perfect love, and is eternal.

The Grand Objective

Returning to our opening passage in Mt. 16; it concludes with verse 27, *“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”* Judgment is sure to come and is a sobering promise to the faithful as well as to the unsaved. The word translated *“reward”* includes in its meaning both punishment and/or recompense for the actions—but not for isolated acts, but for our general course of conduct, that is, according to our character, which harbors the whole of our moral and ethical qualities. This was the intent of Jesus’ rebuke of the Pharisees when He said, Mt. 12,34 *“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”* Man’s character matters, his nature matters, the abundance of his heart matters; thus, the exact nature of the soul of man matters much to God.

The objective of the salvation of the soul is for the maturing of the children of God unto sons of God, and for the preparation of the Church to become the eternal bride for the Son of God. The present hour is in the age of the Church in which Christ is the Head and we believers are the body. (Eph. 1.22-23) But at the return of Christ the Church will no longer exist as such, because it will be elevated to a special relationship with Christ; the Church will become the Bride of Christ. This joining is described in Rev. 19.7-8

“7Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” 8And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

“Being arrayed in fine linen”, “which is the righteous acts of the saints,” spoken of is the culmination of the salvation of the soul. Being arrayed with fine linen is being adorned with Christ, into which the saints are groomed all their days on the earth, to grow into His nature and likeness. The single-most question for each to ask is, “to what degree has each

individual believer spiritually grown and matured towards the stature of Christ. This objective is made abundantly clear in Eph. 4.11-16, taking pause to read it slowly...

*11And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13**till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;** 14that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

Time does not permit a full discussion of this passage of scripture as will be done at another time, but the most critical objective of Christ for the Church is clearly brought forth: “*13till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*”

“To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;” The NASB Bible translates it this way, “*to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*” The goal is the maturity of the souls of men and women, a maturity towards some measure, some standard, which is Christ. This passage lays forth two great objectives for the functioning Church. The first is the building up the Church in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, to make Him real and living and not just a matter of intellectual memorization; the second ministry of the Church is the formation of Christ in each soul, as One “*dwelling in the heart through faith.*” (Eph. 3.17) This is spiritual reality! It is going beyond the outward religious practices of church attendance, Bible reading, obeying commandants, and practicing rituals. It is a living reality of “*Christ in you the hope of Glory.*” This is the great mystery Paul wrote about in Col. 1.27. It is a spiritual reality above and beyond any understanding by the natural man, but clearly within the vision of the believer.

The picture here is for the perfecting or maturing of the Church to show forth the image of God. Each member of the Church may partake of this faith towards being full grown. No one individual, in all good sense, can attain the absolute perfection of Christ in his or her life on this earth, not so long as we have these unredeemed bodies to bear. Interestingly however, it is written in Eph. 4.7 “*to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.*” Each believer is only expected to grow and mature in the stature of Christ according to the grace given to him, but none can perfectly attain the fullness of Christ on this earth.

In finality, faith is the “substance” of things anticipated or hoped for, of things not seen. (Heb. 11.1) As believers born of the spirit of God, we may fully expect God to provide the grace necessary for such spiritual maturity. If we look for it with all our hearts, we will definitely find it. And God, on His side of the covenant, anticipates the fruit of His gift, the maturity of the

believer to the fullness expected by Him. The enabling power is of Christ, which by His Holy Spirit, dwells and rules in the life of the believer. His presence penetrates the whole of the believer with His grace and power to produce Christian life. His work is only limited by the knowledge and faith and resolve of the believer to act upon it. Without knowledge there is no vision, without faith there is no action to believe upon, and without resolve there is no staying power or thirst for its reality.

Judgment

The loss of one's own soul life means the loss of a higher life in the company of God and all that is in heaven. It means to be cast away, isolated to hell. These are those who strive to gain the world and are unwilling to give up any of it, even for the sake of Christ. If the soul is lost, nothing further can be given in exchange for it; there is no redemption in hell. This judgment will be made at the return of Christ before the great White Throne Judgment (see Rev. 20.11) when God judges all the living and the dead "*according to their works,*" meaning that is not of individual and isolated acts, so as to put good deeds on one side of a balance and evil deeds on the other side and the favor of either deciding final judgment. It is, however, the totality of the character of man. The souls of the world are corrupt, evil from the beginning, impure and tainted by original sin. Christ died a horrible sacrifice on the cross for each and every one of them, but the unsaved rejects the offer of the grace of God in favor of other gods or the devil himself. Most regrettably, their fates are sealed.

There is, however, a second judgment, not for the world but only for those saved, being of the Church of the new creation. It is written in 2 Cor. 5.10,

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

In stating, "*we must all*", the "we" speaks directly to believers, both Jew and Gentile, man and woman, regardless of race or culture. It is the time at which the Church must pass by the face of Christ, one soul at a time. There is no provision here for *justification by faith*, or *imputed righteousness*, or a *pardon sealed in the blood of Christ*. These precious foundational acts of grace brought us into salvation and made available all the blessing of God in heavenly places. It is time now to judge how our souls have been transformed into that measure of Christ. This judgment is spoken of in 1 Cor. 3.12-15,

"¹²Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

This judgment does not result in punishment or condemnation to hell or any sort of personal destruction. It is a judgment of eternal rewards that may or may not accompany our lives as living in the new heaven and new earth, in our resurrected bodies; one may thus receive

rewards or suffer the loss of those rewards, though, *“he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”* I believe this judgment will assign blessing and duties and responsibilities in the Kingdom of our Lord and God; it pertains to eternal life in our resurrected bodies on this newly created earth. There is, *“no temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”* (Rev. 21.22) Somewhere, somehow in the midst of all of this is the throne of God and that of our Christ; it is here, where we will sit with Christ as His bride, where we will rule and reign with Him throughout eternity—according to the same measure of blessing received. (2 Tim. 2.12, Rev.20.6)

Gal. 6.7 *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*