

Man's Search for Life

By RT Nusbaum

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

John 5:39

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"

John. 4:14

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"

John 10:10

Hunger Points to Finding Abundant Life

There is a constant quest going on in the lives of Christians today. Many are struggling with the same old besetting sins. Others just cannot seem to break out into the glorious Christian walk that they were expecting. Because of this lack, the people of God are seeking any method that will help them overcome the obstacles of life.

Amazingly, in John chapter four Jesus said that we will never thirst again, and yet there seems to be a great hunger and thirst among believers. They have dissatisfaction with what they presently walk in and possess. This dissatisfaction has led to a searching and exploration to find the thing that can lay to rest this dissatisfaction.

In their search, believers are pursuing gifts, the anointing, or some supernatural experience to bring them into a spectacular Christianity. They have sought out the newest teaching or the latest movement of the Spirit. These people are already saved, but they are not satisfied. There is restlessness among them. For these believers, they are truly satisfied with salvation, but the point of dissatisfaction is in relation to the kind of life they are living.

The purpose for which God has allowed this lack in the life of believers is to cause them to realize that there is something beyond what they now possess. That hunger is meant to drive them until they have discovered God's great provision that will cause them to never thirst again. They must realize that though they received Life at salvation, they have never as yet discovered what God means when He offers to Christians an abundant Life.

The Desire for Something More

“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase; this is also vanity.”

Ecclesiastes 5:10

In the scripture, silver represents redemption, which is one of the great truths of the Bible. All men that come to God must enter through the doors of salvation. But redemption is just the entrance into all that God has for us. Redemption will save you, but unless you see salvation as something more than salvation from hell, it will not ultimately satisfy you. This does not mean that you are dissatisfied with your redemption. NO! That is not the meaning at all. The dissatisfaction that you feel is not with redemption, but because of a sense that there is more. You may drink from the cup of salvation, but at dinner, a person is not satisfied simply with drinking but in partaking of a full meal. Certainly, redemption is wonderful and has a huge place in the plan of God. But we must see this redemption that is ours in broader terms than we do presently, or the restlessness will remain. The dissatisfaction is a result of the realization that there is more!

Defining the Abundant Life

Many preachers will boldly proclaim to you that there is more. Some use a term that, for them, defines this more full Christian existence. They call it “the abundant Life”. However, their definition of the abundant Life is used to describe an increase of material possessions. Did Jesus say, in John 10:10 that He was come to bless our lives? NO! He said, “I am come that they might have life (My Life)”, not bless your life with more abundance. But even if we attain to such a blessed life, the before stated verse says that he that loves to have abundance will not ultimately be satisfied with increase.

From the Lord's point of view, abundant Life is not abundance of things that pertain to earth life. The real issues here relate to ultimate satisfaction and not a temporary contentment. The believers at Laodicea were saved people. They also lived with abundance in terms of material riches, and yet the Lord Jesus felt that they needed to progress in ways other than in future salvation from hell or present earth possessions (Rev. 3:16-18). They had yet to experience abundant Life.

Others see the reality of abundant Life bound up with particular attributes or moral actions. To have this kind of life involves no more than behavior modification. This is nothing short of seeking to please God by the good works and actions we can produce. In many ways, Christianity has become like all the other religions. Muhammad, Buddha, Confucius, and Socrates can bring us good teaching, moral excellence, and religious guidelines just as Christian religion can. For this they all may be commended as rendering help and aid to humanity, but all this falls far short of abundant Life. The characteristic of a Christian is Life, not his particular ethical code.

Neither is the abundant Life an intellectual grasp on Christianity. An intellectual Christianity is what religion brings, but it cannot impart Life. What do I mean by an intellectual Christianity? You can believe something without the impartation of Christ as Life. Through this view, salvation is only defined in terms of what you believe. There is only an intellectual acceptance and affirmation of what is presented as "the gospel". But it is not what you believe that makes you right. It is receiving the right Life - Christ.

Religion can present doctrines and a system of beliefs. Most of it may be morally correct and good. All of it may even be based on the Bible, but this sort of religion cannot impart Life. Why? It cannot because it has no Life to give. Jesus Christ is the Life. The Lord does not live within organized religion. He lives IN US. The most anyone can do is point people to Jesus, not just as the Savior but as the sole Source of Life. For the writer of the gospel of John, the problem with mankind was not just an ethical issue but that of quality of life. As he saw it, Jesus was not just superior but was the only hope for mankind.

Living Life, Not Doing Work

Many in Christianity have made witnessing, praying, and engaging in other good works as the goal instead of living Christ. So when a time comes that we thought we SHOULD HAVE witnessed (because we thought that is what it is about), we miss it

and think we failed. But we were created in Christ Jesus unto good works (cf. Eph. 2:10). What is supposed to come out of us is Christ and what He would do. If it is HIS LIFE that is producing the witnessing, then that is what was supposed to happen, but if not, then we should not want to witness for witnessing's sake. We ought to want to be a vessel of the Life of Christ. Because we have made the Christian life consist of certain acts such as prayer and witnessing, we are constantly under the gun to produce those things, and if we do not, we feel we are a failure.

The Issue Is Life

In John chapter six, Jesus said the problem was that the people of God had no Life in them. Obviously they had some kind of life because they were living and breathing. Paul helps us understand better what Life Jesus meant. Ephesians 4:18 says that they were alive in the flesh but aliens to the LIFE of GOD. The Life to which Jesus and Paul were referring was the very Life of God through Jesus Christ in us. In other words, the New Testament is not calling for us to live a higher quality of life that will be more pleasing to God; it is calling for the Life by which we live to be God's Life. This can be seen in other passages of scripture, such as Romans 6:3, where we are not exhorted to walk in a better lifestyle but in a new Life. Sadly, many today only view the new birth as a new start, as if God wipes their slate clean and they get another chance. They do not realize that the cross is God's firm declaration that there will be no more chances for the flesh. Paul makes this plain by saying, "I am crucified with Christ." Putting Christ in us is the New Testament declaration that God has given up on humanity and therefore has now given His Son as our Life. He now only accepts Jesus: "not I but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).

One main problem is that many do not see the need for a completely new Life other than the one they already have. They may see that they have some problems and shortcomings, but they also believe that just a few improvements here or a few adjustments there could remedy this. However, that is not God's view of the situation. We must learn to view ourselves as God sees us. In His eyes, we are "dead in sins and trespasses" (cf. Eph. 2:1). The use of the word "dead" is pretty harsh! According to the scriptures, we were not just in need of forgiveness for our sins and trespasses, but in need of Life. It seems that God only viewed sins as the fruit of an even deeper problem pertaining to the core life within us, which produced the bad fruit in the first place. Death is the only true remedy.

Reconciliation with God was brought to us through Jesus' death and resurrection. But know this: what was dead and lifeless before the cross was not reconciled. There

is no resurrection from that kind of death. The dead were brought into death with Christ so that we might be partakers of the Life of resurrection – Him. Jesus stated, “I am the resurrection AND the life” (Jn. 11:25). Offering forgiveness to a dead corpse is not sufficient for his needs. The thing that is most valuable to a dead man is the offer of life. Likewise, offering cleansing to a dead man is of no avail. Again, life is the one thing that he needs more than anything else. However, it is interesting to note that many Christians major on the subjects of cleansing by the blood of Jesus or forgiveness of past sins while ignoring the great subject of Christ as Life.

Saved from Myself by His Life

Most of those who are reading this booklet are already saved and understand salvation. Or do we? We may understand our need to be saved from hell, the work of the devil, and the influence of the world, but do we realize that there is a need to be saved from ourselves? Jesus spoke more often about losing your life than He did about saving your life from external things.

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

Matthew 16:24

To accomplish this part of our salvation requires more than an act of God on our behalf; it requires an exchange. For the believer to enter into full salvation, he will have to learn what the phrase “Life by the Son” really means. Having Life by the Son (which is Jesus Christ) involves more than Him simply extending a believer’s existence in a place called heaven. It is the receiving of the Life of Christ as our very own life. However, no man will do this until he has seen the emptiness and fruitlessness of his own life. Until that happens, he will be content to live FOR GOD by means of his own life. Long after a man has received salvation from hell, he must be confronted with the need to be saved from himself.

We find this contrast in Romans chapter five, where we are presented with the concepts of reconciliation and union. We are reconciled to Him by His death, but we are saved by His Life. “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:9-10). Some Christians seem to understand the concept of reconciliation. We were separated from God by sin, and through the work of Jesus in

His death, He has destroyed all enemies. We are now reconciled to God, for there is peace between the two. Reconciliation is the bringing together of two parties that were formerly at odds. Notice the emphasis, that it involves TWO.

God has a greater purpose than just bringing two parties together. His plan has always involved union. The concept of union is the taking of two parties (which were formerly reconciled) and making them ONE. In God's mind, reconciliation was never an end in itself. Reconciliation can be likened unto bringing two enemies together so that they become friends, but union involves a far more intimate relationship. Union would be more on a relational level of a husband and wife who are no longer two but who have become one. We are not just sinners brought back but made the Bride of the Lamb.

The answer to life's dilemmas is bound up in Life. Of course, I am talking about the Life of Christ within the believer and not just the Life of Christ who is in heaven, watching over all things. His Life in us is the key to overcoming. The problem is, most believers are not looking to Jesus as their Life but simply looking to Him to give answers. A person can get answers from the Lord and yet carry them out by their own life and means. Most of us know that only His Life is unselfish, but what we have not seemed to grasp is that His Life is in us as a resource.

When Christianity is understood from the proper perspective, then victory and defeat are not defined by how well we did in our present circumstances. Instead, we are considered victorious when we have walked in His Life and nature. Regardless of how we did in the circumstances, we are considered defeated when we have failed to lean on the Life of Christ within. Resorting to our own strengths and abilities is the worse defeat.

What many Christians have yet to learn is that Jesus' Life is sufficient for every need. However, to walk in the Life of Christ does not guarantee that no contrary circumstances will come our way. His Life will carry you through circumstances that seem like defeat. We think of defeat as a sense of not being able to make it or go on, but His Life goes on. The nature of Christ will inspire you when your circumstances depress you. His Life is sufficient. It is more than sufficient, for it does not just give you the victory; it IS the victory. Victory lives within you. Have you realized the victory, or are you still looking for it as an experience? Stop searching for victory. He is already present within you as Life.

Jesus Christ is far more sufficient than religion ever could be. He brings us Himself as our Life. It is not that He merely transmits some teachings to us, depositing some virtue into the human race before being taken up into heaven. That Christ is our Life is well beyond Him simply being an example for us to follow or Him just being the standard by which our morals are measured. No, He Himself came to be our Life.

In Him is Life because He is Life. All who are in Him (who live in union with Him) possess Life, and Life possesses them. That is the real difference between Life and religion. In religion, one must work to possess something, whereas by means of the Abundant Life Himself, Life possess us. Consider this: the Life is in the Son, the Son is in me, and I am in Him. If this is true, then we share in a common Life. “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (I Cor. 6:7).

What that verse sets forth is not even “Jesus is the Lord of my life”, which phrase implies that we have and are something apart from Him that we can still control. This verse is speaking of the Lord AS my Life. What Jesus gives of Himself springs up as Life within us. We have attained the abundant Life when His Life is springing up within us who are earthen vessels. I John 5:11 says, “...God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” It is the Life of Christ that causes us to never thirst again, for only when we live by His Life are we truly satisfied.

More than only receiving that Life, we must learn how to draw from it and live by it. As long as men try to fill their hearts with the waters that flow from religion, they will always “thirst again” (cf. Jn. 4:13). Divine Life is not only necessary for our salvation, it is also necessary for our satisfaction. Our satisfaction is not found in tasting this water but in His Life springing up within us as Life and pouring out of us as Life.

Life the Light of Men

John 1:4 declares that the Life of Jesus is the light of men. John did not see Jesus’ Life as a better Life. When he really saw Jesus, he saw all men as darkness. This was a great contrast. Jesus was so much above all other men that he had seen that the only description for Him was light. But there is more! He did not see Jesus just as better and higher but that somehow His Life was like a candle that could lighten all other men. In other words, He did not have to remain alone but could be in other men, and they could appear as light BY HIM in them. John did not just see a great man or even the light of the world. He saw hope for men who, in contrast to Christ’s

Life, were nothing more than darkness. But Jesus did not bring a message of hope, nor was He the hope in and of Himself apart from the hope related to men acquiring the light of Life within. In this way, Jesus does not coach darkness toward a better day but fills them with His own Life that dispels their darkness while He alone shines. This is the same as the Father's view on the Mount of Transfiguration. There, Jesus is the highest and best, but we are with Him and still in existence. But when the Father speaks, there is ONLY ONE, and all else on that mount are unseen. We are there, but only Jesus can be seen.

John proclaimed, "In Him was life". That is the key! He is a Life-giving spirit (cf. I Cor. 15:45). That statement gives definition to His spirit and nature. He is not just a King or a Savior. He is not just an external leader. He is identified by one of His greatest attributes toward man: this Man is the resource for all other men having Life.

Life Today

Suppose a doctor asks, "Are you alive?" How would you respond? The question of life and death is applicable to your current state, not your previous experience. In other words, you would not say you are alive because you were born thirty years before, or because you had a birthday last week. These are but historical facts; it does not necessarily mean you are alive and well TODAY. Upon hearing of the death of someone, you might comment that they appeared to be quite well the day before. Nevertheless, they are dead today. Life is a daily condition, not a historical one. In like manner, the question of spiritual life is a matter of my condition today, not five, ten, twenty, or fifty years ago. In order to live today, we must have His Life today. This must be a daily reality.

Christ compared His flesh to the bread from heaven, called manna, which fell daily and sustained the Hebrews during their exodus from Egypt and subsequent wandering in the desert. Each day, a new visitation was made to collect fresh manna. All that was not eaten by sunset would become filled with worms by sunrise. We are grateful for the multitude that has tasted of the Lord's goodness, but the issue is not in tasting the Lord but in feeding upon Him daily. Is this your experience?

After many years of being Christians, we can perhaps smile, sing, appear loving, and be very engaged in spiritual work, yet have little Life, vitality, or freshness of spirit. All we have to do is open our mouths, and people with discernment will quickly perceive whether we are bringing forth Life or death. We can repeat word

for word what we said last week, but if we have not touched Life today, we are only babbling spiritual phraseology. Or we can hear a message and touch the Life of the Lord in the brother or sister who shares it. Then we bring it home and communicate what we heard to our brothers and sisters, employing the same words and illustrations, yet it fails to bring Life to the hearers. Why? It was a borrowed life, not an actual entering into Christ and receiving from Him. The words may be correct, but without Life even correct words are of little value.

Our Lord was born in a little town called Bethlehem, which means, “House of Bread”. Christ taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11). Day by day we eat His flesh and drink His blood (cf. Jn. 6:53). This speaks of Life and daily communion. No matter what our previous history and walk with God, everything hinges upon today and now. Union into Life must be maintained; fellowship must be unbroken; communion must be continuous; abiding is always a present action.

The Meaning of Circumcision

One reason why some Christians are not so quick to embrace the reality of Christ as their Life is because we tend to hold our own life as so precious. Therefore when we are faced with losing our life on account of His replacing it, we balk at the prospect. What we need to realize is how much greater Life by the Son is than our lives in this world. But the reality is that we can only have one life or the other -not both.

Jesus told us that He is the Vine, and we are the branches. The branch must truly come to the realization that he can do nothing on his own (cf. Jn. 15:5). As long as there is one small portion of confidence in self, then there is a recipe for failure. The sign of circumcision was given to the people of God. It was not initiated with Abraham while he was coming out of the Ur of the Chaldees but later on in his walk. What was represented as being cut off was the flesh of human confidence in earth abilities, for it was given concerning Ishmael (cf. Gen. 17:9-19). It was not a reference to cutting off of sinful habits or the death of the old man. Paul wrote, “We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3). It is the flesh that has confidence in its own abilities to do something for God.

Ishmael did not represent Abraham's launch into a time of sexual satisfaction to satisfy some base desire. He represents the desire on the part of a godly man to please God with something other than the promised Seed. As far as producing a "seed", Abraham succeeded, for his name was Ishmael. It was not as if Abraham's attempt with Hagar the Egyptian was a failure because she only brought forth the wind (cf. Isa. 26:17-18). What came forth became something that Abraham loved and cherished. He felt no sense of failure or futility. Human reason, better known as the knowledge of good and evil, tells us that we not only have not failed but also are on the right track with God.

That Ye Might Have Life

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

John 5:40

John 5:39-40 are Jesus' words to people about coming unto Himself in the Scriptures that they might have LIFE. Jesus was not lonely in the sense that He needed human bodies to come to Him and be around Him. As God, He did not have the need for all His lowly creatures to come to their Creator for answers and help. People regularly came and gathered to Jesus. However, that "coming" to Him did not seem to satisfy Him. No! He wanted people to come with the intention of becoming partakers of His very own Life.

Man was originally created with the capacity to contain and to receive God's Life. We find this fact in I Corinthians 6:19 where it says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" God especially made us this way so that the Life of His Son could reside and thrive within us. Too many come to Jesus by means of a group setting but never come to Him seeking for His Life alone to function in them.

Unlike some modern day ministers, simply drawing a crowd was not Jesus' goal. Large groups of people regularly came to Jesus. When they returned from being with Him, they may have had changes in their physical bodies or in their stomachs being full, but they remained separate from His kind of Life. This is because the need is not simply to come to Jesus. Thousands came and heard His Word, but the Living Word Himself must reside within. The change they needed was not a change that He brought them but a change that He is. Being touched by Jesus is one thing, but being joined to Him as one, is another. Can you see a difference between receiving the blessing and receiving the One who blesses?

The average believer feels that the goal is to be touched by Jesus. They have their own life and think that Jesus' job is to improve it and make earth life more comfortable. Few recognize that at the core of our lives is selfishness and a "me-centered" motivation. They also do not recognize that even if our lives on this planet were wonderful, God is only satisfied with "Son Life" and wants us to give up whatever life we have for His Son's. I John, 5:12 tells us, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

The reason why so many are ignorant of God's plan concerning imparting the Life of His Son is because our main concept of life with God involves Him pardoning and repairing OUR LIFE. Few realize that since the wages of sin is death and all have sinned, that the death sentence was not pardoned but carried out by Christ on the Cross. The apostle Paul recognized the need and said, "I am crucified with Christ." To comprehend the full plan of God is to comprehend that it involves more than a pardon of your life; it involves an impartation of His Life. The apostle goes on to say, "Nevertheless I live, but not I, Christ liveth in me." The new birth is the seed of God placed within us (cf. I Pet. 1:23).

How sad it would be for people to misconceive the Father's plan by assuming that the very life that God meant for death, man has assumed that God pardoned. Because of this misconception, they would constantly present to God what He despised and put away on the cross. There is a big difference between pardoning your life and giving you His Life. The receiving of new Life is to receive a new nature. Painting a leopard "lamb white" may change his exterior look, but he is still a leopard on the inside. God has provided the Life of His Son for all believers.

Life Was Manifested

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)"

I John 1:1-2

These verses declare that the eternal God who was from the beginning was manifested. It was not the ministry that was manifested. Church services were not

manifested, nor was doing things for God to gain rewards. It was the Life that was manifested.

Regardless of what areas of ministry we may feel called to be involved with, the first purpose is the manifesting of Jesus' Life. When Jesus came, His priority was not that of keeping commandments in order to please God. He was busy manifesting Life – the Life of the Father. The Bible did not say that the Word was kept but that it was made flesh (cf. Jn. 1:14). It did not say that the right message was delivered. It is not just about finding truth in word or in doctrine. The Father wants His Son manifested in us and through us. Too many who have received God's redemption have not seen it for what it fully is. They have faithfully served God in the duties of the Christian religion, but in all they do they are not manifesting Christ.

Why is there such a dryness and emptiness in modern Christianity? It is because we have left out the most important element of what is required – LIFE. We have substituted a committed Christian life in place of the Life of Christ and wonder why we are burnt out, tired, and lifeless. May the Holy Spirit bring us back to our first love, Jesus, and help us to discover Him as Life and not just as Savior and miracle worker. ***