

Eternal Life is a Person

By: Sylvia Pearce

"This is a chapter from "The Treasures of Darkness."

"He that hath the Son hath (Eternal) Life;"

(I John 5:12)

I call the book of John the "I am" book. Jesus never said that He would give us a little piece of himself called "the way, the truth, and the life." He didn't say he would give us a little bit of bread and it would be life to us. He didn't say that he would give us resurrection, or life, or living water, and these would help us have more of God. No, what he did strongly and emphatically declare was this: "I am the Word, I am the Light of the world, I am the Living Water, I am the Bread of Life, I am the Resurrection and the Life, I am the Way, I am the Truth, and I am Eternal Life." God's name always has been "I AM," not, "I have it to give." We do not have a distant God, dishing out to us humans, little bits of himself to live on. No, He has given us the fullness of Himself.

The mystery of the gospel is, "Christ in you, our only hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). He is the deity in the temple, He is the contents of the vessel, He is the vine of the branch, He is the husband of the wife, and He is the head of the body. He firmly announced to all His creation, "My glory will I not give to another"(Isaiah 42:8). Therefore, salvation is a Person, Love is a Person, the Truth is a Person, Peace is a Person, Righteousness is a Person, and Eternal Life is not just a place we go after death, but it is a Person! His plan from the beginning was to create a family of sons who would freely contain and express His deity nature throughout eternity.

It takes a great blow to our egos to really know that we are only the clay pots and not the glory of the contents. Christ is the content, it is He that fills the temple. Yet we have been falsely

taught that we are the one who should fulfill the law and try to fill our temples with good works. The essence of all idolatry is trying to be what only God is. This too is the essence of legalism. Trying to be good leaves our hearts empty and still crying out for more. For it is Christ who can fulfill the law in us, and it is He that wants the glory. We are His dwelling place, not our own dwelling place.

Could this be why Christians are so miserable? We, of all people, who know that our sins are forgiven and our future destination is heaven, should live in the joy of the Lord most of the time. But do we? I dare say that if we are honest, most of us experience the very opposite. I believe that most of us live condemned and frustrated lives, trying to cope with what we have and wonder why faith doesn't work. That is why so many Christians are crying out to Jesus, "Come quickly Lord Jesus," as they wait to be relieved from their misery by the second coming of Christ.

Our salvation and entrance into the kingdom of God is wonderful, but it's not good enough to just know that our sins are forgiven. What about now? What about the present tense? Why do we love the Jesus who saves us, but hate the human person that He saved? Did He do only half the work? Maybe we are getting closer to our answer by looking at just that. We think that we are responsible for finishing or perfecting the other half of what doesn't seem complete, namely us. What a job!

We are taught to pray more, read our Bibles more, come to Church more, tithe more, and strive to become more like Jesus. Then there is the problem of the world: we should keep ourselves from worldly thoughts and not overindulge in worldly pleasures such as eating, drinking, smoking, and carousing. Then there are our personal shortcomings: tempers, jealousies, pride, and secret sins. The list goes on forever. But most of all we must look good to the world and keep our reputations and God's reputation respectable because we must be good witnesses. I say it again, "What a job!"

Why doesn't Christianity work? I'm not happy and I'm not satisfied--God is satisfied because He sees his son in me, but I'm not satisfied. I look most of the time like Paul in Romans Seven--"the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I

do. For the will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."

Since the problem is exposed in Romans seven, then the whole solution, which is the missing link in Christianity, is hidden there as well. The real problem and hidden sin of the Christian is self-effort. "I ought to. I should do better by self-effort." It is very subtle, though, for it seems right and good, yet in truth it is the very heart of our problem. The law continually stirs up self-effort because we believe we can and should do it. We are not believing in God, but in ourselves. Colossians 1:27 says, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." The mystery of the Gospel is "Christ in you," yet we believe more in our own performance than Christ in us. That is why the third person of the Trinity (the Holy Spirit) is the least known to most Christians. We are provided with the life of Christ by the Holy Spirit, yet we strive in our own efforts to be that life.

Paul strongly warned the Galatians against legalism in their church. They began their Christian walk by faith alone, but soon after, added all kinds of laws to live by. Therefore, Paul cried out, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth. This only would I learn of you; Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh"(Galatians 3:1-3)? Paul's strong warning "Who has bewitched you," implies that the devil is at work. It is devilish to try to become what only God himself is.

Let us understand though, that the law isn't wrong in itself, for it is God's perfect picture of His holy nature. Our problem is not God's picture of himself, the problem is how to be like that picture. We can never be like God by self-effort, yet God wants us to come to the end of believing that "WE" can do it. The only way that we can come to the end is for us to go right on trying. But don't try half way. Try with all your heart. Try until you're bloody from trying.

Most Christians settle somewhere in-between; a little bit of Jesus, a little bit of me, a little bit of the law, a little bit of

righteousness, a little bit of the devil, a little bit of sin, "Ho hum! God doesn't expect me to be perfect anyway." On the contrary, Jesus demands perfection, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Jesus says it has to be all or nothing. It is better to try until we can't try anymore, than to settle somewhere in the middle ground.

That is why Jesus said to the Laodicean church in the book of Revelation, that because they were lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, He would spew them out of his mouth (Rev. 3:15-16). God wants self-effort to become exceedingly sinful. God wants you to be real desperate, so desperate that you can't try anymore. Then you are more than happy for righteousness not to depend on you. It is a desperate, but thankful heart, that knows that righteousness and eternal Life are both a person, and that person is Christ, who lives in us.