

Life Released

John R Gavazzoni

St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, assures us that, in union with Christ, we have been planted in the likeness of His death so as to be found also in the likeness of His resurrection, and that this union in death and life issues forth in the glory of God---that very glory which raised Christ from the dead---being walked out on earth in us. (see the first section of Romans chapter 6) God permitting, let's give ourselves to the most serious, Spirit-infused scrutiny of the consequences of our Lord's death, and our God-given participation in the same.

The Lord Jesus' words to His disciples, as per His own claim, were spirit and life. Peter, for one, found them to be so, acknowledging to His master, "To whom else shall we go, only Thou hast the words of eternal (eonian) life." There was a containment of the life of eternity in the eon in the words spoken by the living Word of God whereby, with measured release, He conveyed something of the essence of Himself to men in the words that His Father gave Him to speak.

But we need to understand that human speech, as utilized supernally by Jesus of Nazareth, though made to be a conveyance of life and spirit by our Lord, was only preliminary to that total release of life that occurred in His death. Words spoken by Him before His death, or words spoken in His name since then, were drawn and continue to be drawn from a well connecting to a spring whose source is the ultimately inexpressible act by which He, who alone hath life and immortality and blessedness, for our sake, gave Himself over to suffering and death in the Person of His Son.

Anointed words do indeed contain, carry, and give measured release and transmission of spirit and life to thirsty souls, but Oh, dear ones, do not forget their source. Remember, in the communion of the breaking of the Bread of Heaven, and in the cup of the new covenant in His blood, that it was by the rending of His flesh that the sluice gate of the "pure river of water of life" was opened for us. The gospel as a message is rooted in the historical act of God in Christ.

The Book of Hebrews tells us that God has spoken to us IN a Son, a Son crucified for us. That Person, in redemptive action, is the final Word, the heart of the good news. Words spoken to proclaim and/or explain the meaning of God's act in Christ are but teaspoon-size portions drawn from the river. During His earthly life, there was really more containment of the Word which He was than there was release. There is some nourishment to be had from the Seed still in seed-form, but it is in the death of the Seed, in the planting of the seed in the earth that the fully nourishing fruitage occurs.

We are not preachers of a better idea for living, we preach Christ and Him crucified, BUT if our ministry is genuine by virtue of the fact that we have been granted full participation in all that Father has done in Him, it is in our participation in His death by which there is the primal release of life to the world. From His riven side flowed blood and water. From His death flows the reconciliation of the world and the release of His life for the life of the world.

Of course we give testimony to the resurrection of Christ. To mightily witness to His resurrection is at the heart of the apostolic message. He is the resurrected One. He is the Resurrection and the Life, but without His death, His life would have remained contained and inaccessible. Life released by death becomes life-giving and, not only is life itself released in death, but there is a special quality found deep in the atomic structure of the life of God in Christ that can only be unlocked in death.

After laying that firm foundation, here is the application I wish to make for you my brethren "in the tribulation, and in the kingdom, and in the patience of Jesus Christ:" Were people touched by life from the Living One as they heard the wisdom contained in and released as He taught them about the blessedness of the beatitudes? Most certainly. Were there stirrings of life in the hearts of the disciples as he explained to them the meaning of His parables? Yes, indeed. Did those who received His healing touch experience an outflow of His life? Undoubtedly.

But, are you able to receive this? When He yielded His spirit in death, a release of life occurred beyond measure, beyond what even the most anointed words proclaim or the greatest miracles can reflect. It

was a flood-release of life that inundated the vast reaches of the cosmos. So also in the same manner, from your spirit, as you are brought into communion in His sufferings and into conformity with His death, the words that you speak for Him pale in comparison with the outflow of life through death.

For weeks now I have heard Father's whisper to my heart, "surrender, son, surrender; surrender to the ministry of reconciliation that flows from the despised circumstances of your life that I have ordered for you."

So much of today's popular theology has at it's heart---no matter how cleverly scripture is woven together---not the way of the cross, but the way to avoid the cross.

We have Christianized pop psychology and made of Jesus simply one of many who can teach us how to be healthy, wealthy and wise, not to mention influential, admired and acclaimed. It is what Harry Robert Fox calls the constantly reappearing error of grandiosity and triumphalism.

No, I'm not teaching the need to be re-crucified. He died once for all, and we died with Him, but that once-for-all death continually unfolds in us as the life of Jesus, the life that is outpoured in death, is manifest in our bodies. As paradoxical as it sounds, Paul's assurance that God always causes us to triumph in Christ is inextricably linked to identification in the death of Christ.

Paul spoke of "death working in us." It's hard to get your mind around it, but the death that works in us for the release of life is an already accomplished death in Him. That summary death will continue to work in us until all resistance is shown to be fruitless, full of delusion and already defeated in Him. The words, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done," must become our words also. You see, Jesus offered Himself through the eonian Spirit, said the writer of Hebrews, and that self-offering will be exhibited in us who live by that Spirit.

Don't be surprised if a stubbornly militant fear grips your heart each time the Father, by the life of Christ within, calls you to absolute surrender to that will which is good and acceptable and perfect. It will appear as a most frightening specter suggesting that, if you have

suffered thus far in your life, you haven't seen anything yet if you dare to embrace whatever He chooses to send your way, or that He just might keep you in the intolerable place where you presently find yourself.

The one impulse within that assuredly comes from the Spirit of Christ is one that you might sense in one of many different ways, whether as clear words or just an awareness of a disposition in your depths, but in one way or another, it will call you to trust the love of "My Father and your Father." Only the life of Christ within can bring us to that which the song writers testify in the words with which I close:

"I have found a deep peace that I never had known, and a joy this world could not afford; since I yielded control of my body and soul to my wonderful, wonderful Lord."

"Not what I wish to be, nor where I wish to go, for who am I that I should choose my way. The Lord shall choose for me, 'tis better far I know, than if I onward go, or stay."

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