

LIFE FOR LIFE

When we are free from guilt, we are free to really Live.

There are concepts present in the scriptures that, once grasped, seem to color everything else written there. One is the distinct impression that what God refers to as "Life" has nothing to do with EKGs, the drawing of breath, or the beating of the heart. It seems to have more to do with our having God's spirit within us, making it possible for Him to commune with us. We were created for fellowship with Him. But conditions can exist whereby that fellowship is impossible. This is mirrored in some of our cultures throughout history, by procedures known as shunning, disinheritance, or other similar names. The offender is declared as dead, ostracized, and ignored as though they indeed had passed out of existence. Any communication with them is prohibited. In a very real sense, they are dead to the family.

Our understanding of this is predicated upon the record of the creation. We are told that God formed Adam from the dust of the earth, in His image, and breathed into him, and Adam became a living soul. Curious phrasing there. As though a soul without life were possible. How does a spirit produce something in its image except that when completed, it would have the same spirit? When we perform CPR, we transport oxygen needed for life from inside of us into the body of the victim. When the Spirit breathes into a body, it transports Spirit because that is the essence of what it is. The other creations of God were alive in the breathing sense, but only Adam was given the distinction of "living," and only after the Spirit breathed into him. So let us suppose then that the way Adam was brought to "life," as far as God was concerned, was through an infusion of the Spirit of God. The Holy One then had a companion fit for fellowship.

God cannot lie. Adam was warned that if he ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that he would surely die on that day. He ate, received his punishment, but seemingly did not die. Was God just kidding around with His warning, or was He mistaken? If we are correct in our supposition of God's definition of "life", Adam and Eve did die on that day. Because God could not dwell in the presence of sin, He withdrew His Spirit and His presence from them. As far as companionship with God was concerned, they were dead. They were without Life.

Suddenly, God's economy makes sense. There is a sense of balance in all of God's creation. When matter is destroyed, energy takes its place. When matter expands or contracts, energy is absorbed or released. A vacuum is filled by anything available as soon as possible. In our hypothetical system, physical life is surrendered in return for spiritual Life. In the Old Testament, the shedding of blood was made in return for righteousness. Without this, the one making the sacrifice could not come into the presence of God. Natural life for spiritual Life. In the New Testament, the ultimate sacrifice of the blood and life of Jesus (natural) made righteousness, or Life (spiritual), available to everyone. Even renewing of that new Life requires the daily death of the natural man. Again, life for Life.

Jesus said in John 10:10 that He came that we might have Life and have it more abundantly. He could not have meant that we would be able to breathe more deeply. The only way that what He said makes sense, is if He was referring to the presence of God's Spirit within us growing stronger relative to our carnal nature. It would explain God seeming somewhat indifferent to problems with the physical life and the body. If His Spirit is within us, making us eternal, the physical life which will end is relatively insignificant by comparison. The condition of the spiritual Life is of far more value in producing an eternal companion for Him.

This concept of Life would also explain the strange comments of Jesus regarding those who had "died". The dead, or those who died without the Spirit in them, are then truly dead in every sense and know nothing. Those that are alive in Christ, although physically buried, will rise from the grave. It is not capable of holding back the eternal Life within us when it is time for us to meet Him in the air. This is how Lazarus could be said to be merely "sleeping" after being buried for three days. The eternal Life within him was available to be called back to awareness by God.

Jesus said in John 3:16 that He came that we might have everlasting Life. There is only one Life that transcends the grave. It is the one that is given by the presence of the Spirit. We can read about it in the Word of God, which is also a manifestation of the Spirit of God and as such is quick (alive) and powerful. Better still, we can accept it into ourselves so that it can quicken (bring to life) our bodies upon His return. With that hope within us, it is easy to say, regardless of our physical circumstances. "Life is good."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In the practice called "shunning," do you think it would be better to be actually dead or symbolically dead, knowing what all you have lost?
2. Have you ever wondered what transpired or passed between God and Adam when God breathed into him?
3. If the Spirit of God is eternal and will not pass away, how then can we receive eternal life except that we have that Spirit placed within us and a part of us before this body ceases to function?
4. Do you think Adam and Eve died to God? What do you think of the concept that a holy God will not dwell in the presence of sin? Does the Spirit within you agree? Is it biblical? Does it explain Jesus crying about being forsaken when the load of sin descended upon Him on the cross? How about how alone we feel when we have sinned, but not repented?
5. Do you agree that receiving spiritual "Life" requires the sacrifice of natural "life?" How many ways is this accomplished? Is fasting one of these? Is repentance? Is praise when you don't feel like it? What about giving God glory for what we could claim as our accomplishments?
6. Does your spiritual health matter more to God than your physical health? How about to you? Which one occupies most of your attention?
7. What is abundant Life? How do you go about increasing the amount of it?
8. Does the thought of "dying" bother you? Why or why not?
9. Who do you think are the "dead in Christ" that the scriptures say will rise first to meet Him in the air?
10. Isn't it interesting that the Word of God is described as being "alive?"
11. What do you think happens to those who die on this earth with the Spirit of God in them, between the time they cease to breathe and the judgment? What happens to those who die without the Spirit? The Bible says that the dead know nothing. What do you think that means?