

LIFE, LOVE and LIGHT

The Gospel of John and First Epistle of John

By

Norman B. Harrison, D.D.
Pastor, Bible Teacher and Evangelist

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PART ONE THE GOSPEL OF JOHN THE MANIFESTATION OF LIFE, LOVE AND LIGHT

CHAPTER ONE

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

"I came that they may have life" (John 10:10)

The Gospel of Life would be a very fitting title for our fourth Gospel; thirty-five times the word recurs, and the thought is everywhere present, even to the saturation point; yet it is likewise the Gospel of Love and of Light. The three, in fact, are inseparable. This is so for the simple reason that they have to do with the being, nature and activity of GOD Himself, and GOD is inseparably one.

The Trinity is a mystery; so also are many things within the realm of human observation and experience.

Man himself is such a mystery. Of a threefold makeup, body, soul and spirit, no thought, word or act can find expression in the sphere of one without savoring of the other two; he is a three in one and one in three.

Take electricity, for illustration. We have it and make daily practical use of it. Yet we are compelled to confess that we know not what it is. It mystifies the men who "handle" it most. However, this is evident to all: electricity manifests itself as (1) energy, (2) heat, (3) light. When our appliances seek for power, to turn the wheels of industry, they minimize the light and heat; for heat, to cook our food or fire our furnaces, they minimize the energy and light; for light, to illumine our homes and streets, they minimize the energy and heat. Yet in either one of the three the other two are present. It is impossible to have one without the others; they are inseparable.

So our Lord JESUS CHRIST came, He the Son, manifesting also the Father and the Spirit. His is

a threeperson ministry. His Gospel is Life, plus Love, plus Light.

I The Value of Life

Life is the most valuable possession we have. Nay, it is more than a possession; it is our very self. Personality apart from life is in the very nature of things impossible. Existence hinges upon life. The dog ceases to be when life ceases. It was, but no longer is. Hence, if the life of man does not persist through death, then we ourselves cease to exist.

And for this present - what will a man give in exchange for his life? Pawn what he is for what he may have? To do so is to give up his very power to have. When he barter away his life and breathes his last he leaves it all, be it ten dollars or ten million. Life is the key to everything we are and have; it is our priceless possession; it is our very all.

II The Nature of Life

What is Life? We do not know. With all our knowledge and research it remains a mystery. We experience it, but we cannot produce it or explain it. Why? Is it because GOD has the secret locked up within Himself? Doubtless. When we see Him we will know life - know it in all its secrets and in all its fullness.

JESUS had much to say about life and being.

He spoke of Himself as the self-existent One, the "**I Am**," the One who exists independent of source, circumstance or sense of time. (GOD is the only being of whom this is true.) Then He gives a definition of life, life as man needs it. "**This is life**" - life eternal, unconditioned by time, such life as GOD's is - to "**know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent**" (John 17:3).

From this we get the thought that life is something dependent upon relation to that which imparts and sustains it.

- The electric lamp, for example, finds its life in relation to the power-house.
- The tree finds its life in relation to the soil and sunshine; the branches, in a continuous relation to the parent stem from which their very life and sustenance are drawn.
- The physical man finds his life in appropriating relation to food and air containing the elements essential to his existence.

Then - how can we miss it? - the spiritual man finds his life in a like relationship.

All this takes us one step further back to

III The Source of Life

Let us now read John 1:1-4. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."** (Then man must trace his being back to Him, for, as we go on to read,) **"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."**

Our Life and our Light!

He it was who purposed that we should be in His likeness, of an order superior to the beasts about us. The one authoritative account of our origin, the only account that explains, reads:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (Genesis 1:26, 27).

This it is that makes mankind in general, you and me as individuals, of a different order from the animal; He, the source of our life, **"lighteth every man that cometh into the world"** (John 1:9). The margin says, "every man as he cometh into the world," as though He had guarded against our being "deficient" by personal, individual attention at the time of our coming into being. Oh, how much we owe to Him! What have we that we did not receive, even to our very life?

IV The Need of Life

Now we are prepared to go deeper. JESUS made it plain that He looked upon men as no longer possessed of the life bestowed in creation.

He declared that this fact, namely, their lack of life, was the whole point and occasion of His coming. **"I came that they may have life"** (John 10:10).

He reproached their unbelief, saying, **"Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life"** (John 5:40).

These and like deliverances from the lips of JESUS make evident that His teaching and redemptive work are based upon the fact that man in his natural state is known to GOD as devoid of spiritual life.

Let us read carefully, fitting ourselves into the picture: **"And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with**

Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" (Ephesians 2:1-5).

Here we have sin's historical inception in Genesis 3 traced to its spiritual sequence of death in all men, plus GOD's gracious meeting of man's need with renewed life from Himself.

Hence His declaration to Nicodemus, "**Ye must be born again**" (John 3:7) - born from above, a new accession of life from the Source, even GOD. And now He lays bare the Father's heart: "**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish**" (as we must in our natural, lifeless state), "**but have everlasting life**" (vs. 16).

And John states his purpose in writing: "**That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name**" (John 20:31).

V

The Way of Life

Surely the Way of Life has now become plain to our minds and hearts. JESUS is Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14 :6).

Consider now these words of His: "**For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself**" (John 5 :26). Having "**life in Himself**," He came, lived, died, rose again, and ascended, that we might have life through Him. Today, triumphant above, He has become "**a life-giving Spirit**" (I Corinthians 15:45).

All we need is a believing, receiving relationship.

Hence we read, "**He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life**" (John 3:36).

And the simple statement of the far-reaching result is this: "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life**" (John 5:24).

Wonderful! And simply by believing. How very wonderful!

Now go back to the first crucial statement of faith and its effect.

Mark well: "**As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God**" (John 1:12, 13).

A new start! A new birth! A new life! How? By receiving Him, who has "**life in Himself**," that He may impart life to us.

VI

The Needs of Life

But life has its needs, as inanimate things have not.

A stick we may leave lying at our door, unheeded for days - we have done it no harm; but a plant demands attention - it is alive.

Spiritual life has specific needs.

These needs He is prepared to supply.

- He is the Life-Giver;
- He is also the Life-Sustainer.

Not merely the "**I Am**," the self-existent Source of Life, in the abstract; but "I Am - the Bread, the Light, the Giver of Water (the HOLY SPIRIT), the Way, the Door, the Vine to the branches, the Shepherd to the sheep."

What are these? The things absolutely indispensable to life, to its sustenance and guidance.

Consider for a brief moment how essential to life are the things by which JESUS designates Himself.

- Who for a single day goes without bread, life's necessary food?
- Who passes a day without the benefits of light?
- without the refreshing of water, internally and externally?
- without walking a way marked out for the feet?
- without entering a door to the home or shelter to which it admits?

Evidently, then, by such language JESUS is saying to us, "I am your All; apart from Me ye can do nothing; daily, momentarily, draw upon My supplies of Life for your every need."

The least that the follower of CHRIST can do, once he has sought and claimed the supreme gift of Eternal Life at His hands, is to meet the conditions for keeping that life vitalized, with its every need met day by day. The care that we see bestowed upon the physical man should shame the careless Christian for his neglect of the spiritual man. To keep the life in a state of fullness, to maintain the life abundant, the simple secret is to "**abide**" in Him, thereby continuously to draw upon Him.

VI The Many-Sidedness of Life

Life is varied. Men are variously employed. Life comes to have, in consequence, a variety of viewpoints. We look out upon life through the familiar window of our daily occupation and circumstances. We are appealed to by conceptions akin to our daily round.

Now the amazing thing about our Lord JESUS CHRIST is that He fits into everyone's thinking. He is kin to every man in his day by day round of duty. He is so many-sided, each can find his CHRIST in the mould of his own occupational life and day-by-day experience.

The following is an expansion of the I AM's of John's Gospel to include other similar designations of Scripture:

To the architect - the Chief Corner Stone (I Peter 2:6)
To the artist - the One Altogether Lovely (Song of Solomon 5:16)
To the astronomer - the Bright and Morning Star (Revelation 22:16)
To the baker - the Living Bread (John 6:51)
To the banker - the Unsearchable Riches (Ephesians 3:8)
To the biologist - the Life (John 14:6)
To the botanist - the Lily of the Valley (Song of Solomon 2:1)
To the bride - the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:1)
To the builder - the Sure Foundation (Isaiah 28:16)
To the carpenter - the Door (John 10:9)
To the doctor - the Great Physician (Matthew 8:17)
To the educator - the Great Teacher (John 3:2)
To the engineer - the New and Living Way (Hebrews 10:20)
To the farmer - the sower (Matthew 13:37); the Grain of Wheat (John 12:24); the Lord of Harvest (Matthew 9:38)
To the florist - the Rose of Sharon (Song of Solomon 2:1)
To the geologist - the Rock of Ages (Isaiah 26:4)

("It is more important to know the Rock of Ages than the age of rocks"-Bryan)

To the horticulturist - the True Vine (John 15:1)
To the jeweler - the Precious Stone (I Peter 2:6)
To the jurist - the Righteous Judge (II Timothy 4:8)
To the juror - the Faithful and True Witness (Revelation 3:14)
To the king - the King of Kings (Revelation 19:16)
To the lawyer - the Advocate (1 John 2:1)
To the lover - the Beloved (Song of Solomon 2:16)
To the metaphysician - the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 22:13)
To the news gatherer - the Good Tidings of Great Joy (Luke 2:10)
To the philanthropist - the Unspeakable Gift (II Corinthians 9:15)
To the philosopher - the Wisdom of GOD (I Corinthians 1:24)
To the preacher - the Word of GOD (Revelation 19:18)
To the ruler - the Prince of the Kings of the Earth (Revelation 1:5)
To the sailor - the Anchor of the Soul (Hebrews 6:13)
To the sculptor - the Living Stone (I Peter 2:4)
To the servant - the Good Master (Ephesians 6:9)
To the shepherd - the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)
To the slave - the Redeemer (Galatians 3:13)
To the soldier - the Captain of Our Salvation (Hebrews 2:10)
To the statesman - the Desire of All Nations (Haggai 2:7)
To the student - the Truth (John 14:6)
To the theologian - the Author and Finisher of Our Faith (Hebrews 12:2)
To the traveller - the Guide (Psalm 48:14)
To the toiler - the Giver of Rest (Matthew 11:28)

To the troubled - the Comforter (John 14:18)
To the widow - the Husband (Isaiah 54:5)
To the sinner - the Lamb of GOD (John 1:29)
To the Christian - the Lord JESUS CHRIST (I Thessalonians 1:1)

Many-sided indeed is our CHRIST, commanding the attention of all. Yet our Gospel ever carries us from a mere knowledge about Him, to the need of knowing HIM, teaching us that to know HIM - JESUS CHRIST the sent of GOD - this is life eternal (John 17:3).

Yea, this Gospel was written of purpose "**that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name**" (20: 31).

Dear reader, do not allow yourself to think that you have no need of this life.

"A friend says to me, 'I have not time or room in my life for Christianity! If it were not so full! You don't know how hard I work from morning till night. When have I time, where have I room for Christianity in such a life as mine?'"

- It is as if the engine had said it had no room for the steam.
- It is as if the tree had said it had no room for the sap.
- It is as if the ocean had said it had no room for the tide.
- It is as if the man had said he had no room for his soul.
- It is as if the life had said it had no time to live, when it is life.

It is not something added to life; it is life. A man is not living without it. And for a man to say, 'I am so full in life that I have no room for life,' you see immediately to what absurdity it reduces itself" (Phillips Brooks). Without CHRIST you have no life. CHRIST came that you might have life. It is yours for the taking.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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