



JESUS, THE PATTERN OF TRUE LIFE—2

Derrick Asomaning



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Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV)

I welcome you to this week's message of the Signpost. We will be continuing the series we started last week on the theme, **Jesus, the Pattern of True Life**. We saw in last week's message that Jesus is the only way to our home, that is, God the Father. We also realized that Jesus Christ came to this earth to set before us an example of the life of holiness that will lead us to our home. Hence, without Him, we can never return to God or be restored to a higher state of life that is better than the one in which man was originally created. Moreover, we found out that the life of Christ consisted of seven stages: Condescension, actual life on earth, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession and reigning. We dealt with the first two in last week's message. We will discuss the next one, that is, Christ's death, in this message, and learn the pattern Christ gave us in this stage of His life.

The Third Stage of Christ's Life—Death

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Learn here, reader, the purpose of Christ's death and perceive the love of God shown in it. Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God, took upon Himself humanity so that He might die and destroy the power of the devil and also release us from bondage.

Now, I must ask some questions and endeavor to answer them, as God may help me, to the end that you may gain

understanding and be brought nearer to God. The first question is: Why did Christ take upon Himself human nature? Couldn't He save us without becoming like one of us? The answer is no; Christ could never save us in His divine nature alone. The reason is that man had to pay for the penalty of his sins before he could be saved because of the justice of God. Now, man as a sinner could never pay that debt himself. Accordingly, he needed Christ, the Mediator, to take his place in death. But you and I know very well that God cannot die; and Jesus is God. Thus, Christ had to become flesh and blood so that He could die and pay for our sins. Again, since it was man who sinned, it has to be man who pays the debt.

Moreover, Christ had to come in the likeness of human flesh so that He could speak to us in a language we can understand. For though, Christ, the Wisdom of God had always been among us since creation (for He created everything), the world did not recognize Him. Thus, it is written, *"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him"* (John 10:1). He has always been with us as Wisdom but we could not know Him because of our depravity. He comes to us now as the *"Son of Man"* so that we can see Him with our physical eyes and hear Him with our physical ears.

Accordingly, the Scripture queries, *"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:20-21). That is, through the light of creation, the world, by its own wisdom could not attain to the knowledge of God which leads to salvation, and so it pleased God to send Christ in the likeness of men to preach the way of salvation to us in which if we believe, we receive salvation; which according to the world is foolishness. Let this answer suffice to the first question.

The second question: How does Christ's death destroys the devil and releases us from bondage?

Directing People From Hell To Heaven

For it is written, “...*that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil*”. It must be noted that the devil had the power of death but he no longer has it.

Now, the devil gained power over us through sin and it is only through sin that his power is retained. Once sin is destroyed in one’s life, the devil loses his power over that person. The Scripture says, “*Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*” (Romans 6:16). So, when Adam yielded and obeyed the devil, he (Adam) became his (the devil’s) slave. This is the way the devil gained and maintained his power over the world for centuries, and even now. Therefore, the power of the devil is sin; for sin makes us guilty because “*the strength [power] of sin is the law*” (1 Corinthians 15:56). Paul says elsewhere, “...*For without the law, sin was dead*” (Romans 7:8, KJV). Hence, sin gives the devil the right or power to carry out the curse of the law upon the transgressor, he, being in a certain sense, a messenger of God’s justice just as in the same sense, Pharaoh was the servant of God, that is, an executioner of His will (See Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:16). And God cannot be charged with wrong doing; for it is in His justice that He uses the devil to accomplish His will; and He who does justice does no wrong. But more of this at a later time.

With the explanation above, the answer to our second question becomes clear—Christ’s death destroys the devil and releases us from bondage because it destroys sin in our lives, and it is through His death alone that we receive forgiveness of sin. When God, through Christ, forgives our sins, the devil has no ground to condemn us; and thus, his power is destroyed. Let this answer also suffice for the second question.

The Example Christ Gives Us In His Death

Now, we will ask the third and last question: What example has Christ given us in His death? The answer is simple—It is death. That is, we too must die if we are to live. For it is nothing but death of which Christ has given us a symbol in baptism. Let us examine the Scripture below:

“*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:3-4).

Just as Christ died on the Cross, Christians also die in baptism. What kind of death is meant here? Death, whether physical or spiritual, always involves a separation. Physical death involves the separation of the soul from the body whereas spiritual death involves the separation of those who are evil from God; who is Life. The death in baptism is neither of these although it too is spiritual. The death in baptism is a kind of spiritual death which involves the separation of the soul from its sins. The sins are washed away and the soul is renewed. Thus, through death, we gain life. Concerning this, it is written, “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*” (Titus 3:5). This death is the renewing of the Spirit whereby our sins are separated from us. Baptism then is the symbol of this same work of the Holy Spirit, just as Christ says in John 3:5, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*” Being born of water and being born of the Spirit refer to the same thing; just that the former expresses the effect of the work whilst the later expresses the agency by which that same work is done.

Put to Death the Deeds of the Body

It is based on the above truth that the Apostle exhorted all to mortify the deeds of the body, saying, “*For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*” (Romans 8:13). In other words, if you live in your sins, you will die but if you die to your sins, you will live. To put to death the deeds of the body means that you must separate yourself from your sins; extinguish their influence in your life. This is the only way to eternal life—To die to self and the world and to live to God in true righteousness and holiness without which no one can see God (Hebrews 12:14).

Do not be secured in your presumption and say that you have faith in Christ and so you are saved. It is true that we are saved by grace through faith without works. But we must inquire what kind of faith is meant because, as the Bible says, the devils also believe and tremble (James 2:19). Therefore, hear what the Scripture says, “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love*” (Galatians 5:6). So the faith that save is that which produces good works through love.

May the Lord be gracious to us all and help us possess such faith in His holy name. AMEN!