



LIVING TO GOD

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“LIVING TO GOD.”

ROMANS 6. 1-4; 7. 4-6.

I WANT to bring before you a simple but a very practical subject. It is that of living to God. If you are to live to God, you must know Him. If people do not know God, they cannot live to Him. I want to show you that there is no effort in practical Christianity; there is energy and power, but no effort. There are many people who are trying to live to God, but they do not know Him. If we are Christians, we are the fruit of the gospel. The great thing in the gospel is this, that God approaches us, and He says in unmistakable language, I want you to know Me, in order that you may love Me and live to Me. We think the gospel was preached to us that we might be forgiven and go to heaven when we die. I think that is defective; I quite

admit that relief is one element of the gospel, but it is not the main point in it. I cannot live to God until I have relief—I must have a purged conscience.

My point is that whether I am here or there, I am to live to Him, and that is the true happiness of the creature. “For thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4. 11). It is only living to God that will make you happy, whether it be in this world or in the future.

The epistle to the Romans is the great book where the gospel is expounded. It is a little remarkable that in our version this epistle comes after the Acts. In the latter book you see the apostle preaching the gospel, and in Romans it is expounded. The first thing he shows us in this epistle is our ruin. Man's condition is first brought out in heathendom, then in philosophy, and lastly in Jewish privilege; but he is found wanting. When you come to the scriptures, God does not flatter you; He tells you the naked truth

about yourself. The books written by men are more or less untruthful. In scripture God tells me what I am on the one hand, and what HE is on the other. He tells us the naked truth about ourselves in order that He may introduce Himself: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

In chapters 3., 4. and 5. of Romans, God tells us what He is for us, and we must learn this before we can be for Him. He takes advantage of our ruin, to show all the infinite splendour of what He is. This is the key to the position. Many people reverse this. The point is that you want first to see what God is. You must be established in what God is for you, as distinct from what you are for Him. No question is raised about our state in Romans until we come to chapter 6., and the point there is what we can be for God. I see that God presents Himself in five different aspects in the chapters to which I have alluded; that is as seen in

goodness, grace, righteousness, power, and love. And that blessed God is for us. In chapter 3. we have the righteous platform on which God approaches man through the blood of Christ. At the end of chapter 4., and in chapter 5., we have the righteous platform on to which He brings us in a risen Christ. We are in the presence of the God of resurrection, the God who raised up Jesus our Lord. The gospel is morally grand, its backbone is the righteousness of God. You would naturally think that in the exposition of the gospel, the first thing to be brought forward would be the love of God; no, the scripture says, "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed." It is God's consistency with Himself. Therefore no moral charge can be brought against Him. As I said, chapter 3. is morally greater than chapter 4. It is when we believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord, that we make our start as Christians. No person can get peace

till he knows he is approved of God. If you have not come on to that platform, you cannot face out the question of living to God. If you are there then you can live to Him, having every question settled. God shows us what He is to us, before we can see what we can be to Him. Christ is the measure of all that God will be to you. In chapter 5. it is all "by" and "through" Him. Therefore it is a wealthy chapter, and the Spirit of God continually uses the words "much more." Until we get to chapter 5. nothing is said about what we can be for God, but only what He is for us. My point is that you must know God before you can live to Him.

In chapter 6. the apostle meets a natural thought, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"—God forbid. This raises the question how we are to live to God. The position which the Christian takes is to be dead to sin; this is the moral force of baptism. You

may quarrel about baptism; the enemy does not care about that, if he can keep you from the moral force of what it means. The point here is to show you the moral force of the thing. There is great spiritual meaning in baptism and the Lord's supper. Baptism signifies this, that you are baptized unto Jesus Christ, that you should accept His death and walk in a new kind of life. To put it in a simple way, it means that you have no right to a will down here. Permit an illustration—the moment a man takes the king's shilling he becomes a soldier. He is no longer an agriculturist, but, though a raw recruit, he is in reality a soldier. In baptism you change your position; you pass professedly from one platform to another, in order that you may live to God.

The other part of baptism is that I am to die by man's will. It may seem to be a hard saying, but it is perfectly certain, that I have no right to a will. And, indeed, I have no right to anything in

this world. Baptism means martyrdom. You may say we are not in the presence of that kind of thing now. No, because the world has adopted Christianity as a religion. Satan could not succeed in crushing it, but he corrupted it when he got an Emperor to adopt Christianity. You may depend upon it that Christianity is a suffering thing. I am not to look for favours here. If you are doing so, how do you understand this, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter"? But we are told that such people cannot be separated "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Baptism put them publicly in the position to be slaughtered, but nothing could separate them from the love of God. You cannot measure God's love by earthly benefits. He numbers the hairs of my head, and He takes care of me, but His *love* is seen in another way altogether. Scripture distinguishes things which

differ; but mark, the love of God is in Christ Jesus our Lord. You do not speak of His love in connection with mercies here.

If you recognise Christianity as a suffering thing, you will be compensated; you will have the gain of the Lord's company and of holy intimacy with Him. You get compensation down here, and you come under the influence of Christ; you come to Him in the same way as Peter when he left the boat to go to Jesus. He saw the Lord walking on the water, and he said, as it were, There is no one in the boat I love like You, and the Lord invites him to come. Peter steps out, and what makes him do it is affection for Christ. How does he walk on the water? He is not thinking of himself, but his eye is on Christ.

I want to show you that you must be married to Another in order to bear fruit to God. The journey of the soul begins in Romans 7. 7. You try to please

Christ, but you find out you cannot do so. You have tried, and find there is no good in you; you have no power in yourself. I once started to be, as I thought, a splendid Christian—I said, “I do not belong to the world,” but I soon found out that there was something in me which would not go that way at all. I said, “If I cannot live to God, what is the good of living at all.” Then I discovered that it was *I* who wanted to be a good Christian. The Lord said to me, “Poor creature, draw near to Me now, and learn in Me all the goodness and all the power, and I will love you into accepting My death.” That is practical Christianity. The Lord said to me, “You shall die in My death, under the power of My love.” Love for Christ is the mighty lever in Christianity. If your heart is true to His love, you will be true to that in which it was expressed, and that is His death. The apostle says, “The love of Christ constraineth us.”

People pray that His love may constrain the preacher; but that is not the meaning of it, it is the love of Christ constraineth ME. His love will not pass over my failings in a sentimental way. The man in the seventh chapter of Romans is a converted man who does not know much, if anything, of the love of Christ. The Christian loves what God loves, though he may not have peace. After the inward man he loves what is suitable to God, but the law comes to him and says, "Thou shalt not covet." To covet is to lust. It is not a question of outward action only, but of inward feeling. Lust is that you desire to have something which God does not want you to have. God proposes to deliver me from all this—"The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The man in the seventh of Romans goes through a great inward struggle. Many people pass through the same

experience after their conversion. The difficulty is in learning to distinguish between myself and sin that dwells in me. The soul says in effect, I do not know how to do that which I love to do.

This man needs to learn what it is to be married to Another. He is going along the road where he learns himself. If you want to see the stars by daylight, you must go to the bottom of a deep well. It is only in the depths of the deep well of humiliation and self-judgment that we can learn the infinite blessedness and competency of Christ to lift you up. This question is a momentous one, for all your happiness depends upon it. Cease your struggling and sit down in the presence of His perfection. He says to you, Look at Me and enjoy Me. Think no longer of yourself, but be occupied with Him, and thus you will exchange the misery of self-consciousness for the joy of Christ-consciousness.

The same wonderful Person who is the source of life is the object of life. We are called to look at the perfect expression of life which we see in Him. The Spirit of God has been pleased to take up the figure of marriage in this seventh chapter of our epistle. He does this when writing to the Gentiles because they would understand it. The wife should be what a man makes her. If a husband says he has a bad wife, he proclaims his own shame. Let us suppose the case of a perfect husband; the wife says to him, I feel my imperfections. He replies, Never mind, come under my influence, and I will teach you. We come under the influence of Christ, because we love Him, and admire His perfections. You can never love Him until you enjoy Him and can say, "With adoring fervour in this Thy nature grow." Some dear Christians cannot abandon themselves for Christ; you have a title to disown yourself for Christ. The old man is what

I am according to the flesh. Now I am no longer linked with that, but I have gone over to Christ; He is my Lord. Death has severed the link between the old man and myself; Christ, by the Spirit, has made the tie; I am married to Him. You must know that you are a Christian before you can act like one, and for this it is necessary to know Christ as your Lord and Head.

Peter walking on the water is an illustration of Romans viii. 2, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is to love God; the law of sin and death is to love myself. What I desire to show you is what all this means in a practical way. The first action of the love of God in a Christian is to cause him to love God; you live to Him in holy love. That is what the Lord did in perfection as a Man when down here. That is the law of the life which I have been

brought into ; it will set me free from the law of self-love. Do you think any one will offend you if you are in the enjoyment of His love. If you are in the love of God, you are not thinking of yourself ; you are small in your own eyes, and therefore you are safe. If you have before your soul the blessedness of what God is, you will desire to live to such a God as He. The great point is that He has not only relieved me of the burden of my sins, but He desires that I should KNOW HIM, THAT I MAY LOVE HIM AND LIVE TO HIM FOR EVER.

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