

Because of the Covenant I Can Live the Christian Life

Psalm 63:1-8

“God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.”

Not long ago there was an article in a major magazine titled, “Evil: What Makes People Go Wrong?” **For an article on the subject of evil to appear on the cover of a major magazine reveals there is some major concern about what is happening in our American society.** What the article did not get around to saying is that **humanity is made up of fallen sinners, first by nature and second by choice.** What they also failed to say in the article is that **we do not have to stay in that fallen and sinful condition.**

And yet, 2 Peter 1:3-4 makes this very clear for us, “By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.”

You see, the Christian lives in two worlds, he has two addresses, and is a resident of two realms. Paul brings out this idea in

Ephesians 1:1 when he says, “Paul, as apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Notice that they are “at Ephesus” and they are “in Christ Jesus.” When he writes in Philippians 1:1 he says, “To all the saints in Christ Jesus, who are at Philippi...” When he writes in Colossians 1:2 he says, “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colosse...” And so, with repeated emphasis Paul is saying that as Christians we have two residences - one is ***geographical*** and the other is ***spiritual!***

In Galatians 1:4 we are told that Jesus Christ “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” **Now the Bible is not speaking here of taking us to heaven, for it is not the death of Christ that is going to take us to heaven, but the Second Coming of Christ.** Here the Bible is speaking of something that has already happened as seen in Colossians 1:13 where we are told that God “For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son,” The word “rescued” means “transplanted,” as if a plant were taken from one place and put someplace else! **So a part of salvation is God taking us out of this “present evil age” and putting us in the “age to come.”** Hebrews 6:4 says we who are believers have “tasted the powers of the age to come.”

Thought out the Bible there is an emphasis on “this present evil age” and on the “age to come.” The “present evil age” is ***the age in which we are now living***, and the “age to come” is ***when Jesus will usher in the visible, physical. Kingdom of God!*** For an account of this “age to come” look with me at Isaiah 11:6-9, “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra’s den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled

with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” And then Revelation 21:4 says, “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” But, the writer of Hebrews says that we who are saved have “tasted the powers of the age to come.” **A taste is not a seven-course meal, but its real.** During the Holidays Linda made a chocolate “sheet cake,” and she cut that cake in half, and then into fourths, and then into eights, and then into sixty- fourths. Now, I didn’t get the whole thing, but I had a “taste” of it. **The difference in a “taste” is not quality but quantity.** In this “present evil age” we just get a “taste” of what God has for us, but in “the age to come” we are going to get it all!

In other words, a portion of “the age to come” has already come to believers! Therefore, the child of God is a person who is living in the *future* even at this *present time*, and that is the reason we began by saying *the Christian lives in two worlds*. The Christian life, when lived in it’s fullness, is lived in the heavenlies, as seen in Ephesians 2:5-6, “Even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” I’m convinced that the reason that most Christians *fail* and are not experiencing the Christian life as “joy unspeakable and full of glory,” and as “the peace of God, which passes all understanding,” is because they have never learned to *live* the *heavenly life* while on *earth*!

If the real truth was known, the greatest majority of we Christians are living somewhere between “Thank you Jesus” and “Lord have mercy.”

If you and I, in this “present evil age,” are to experience the blessings of God, and if we are going to be able to unlock all that God has for us, then we must learn how to live the heavenly realm of our Christian lives! And that simply means that we must come to understand that we are in a covenant relationship with Almighty God! And with that covenant relationship comes three biblical truths:

First, because of our covenant relationship we have a heavenly citizenship. Philippians 3:20 says, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” The King James Version says, “For our conversation is in heaven...” The Greek word used here for “**conversation**” is not found any other place in the entire New Testament. It pertains to life as a citizen, and the full meaning of the Greek here relates to the commonwealth or state, and this is the idea that we get from 1 Peter 2:11, “Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls.” In other words, our real citizenship is in the commonwealth of heaven here on earth!

Philippi was a Roman Colony. The great characteristic of these Roman colonies was that wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome. No matter where they were, Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed them; the Latin tongue was spoken; Roman justice was administered; and Roman morals were observed. That simply meant that although these Roman citizens were in foreign countries, they were still to live by the laws of their native country.

You remember when Paul was taken and beaten and thrown in jail while in Philippi, Acts 16:37-38 says, “But Paul replied, “They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison - and we are Roman citizens. So now they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!” When the police reported this, the city officials were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens.” Today the foreign Ambassadors of various countries and/or governments that are assigned to the United Nations headquarters in New York and Washington are still governed by the laws of their native countries, not those of the United States. The divine fact is that believers are heavenly citizens, pilgrims on earth, but citizens of the heavenly world, thinking on things above; and since we are citizens of the heavenly world, we are governed by the laws of heaven!

Now, I am not saying that you are to ignore the laws of our land, and I am not saying that you are free to defy the Constitution by which we are governed in America. I hope you understand that, if not we are all in trouble.

Second, because of our covenant relationship we have heavenly requirements. We are in this world, but not of it's spirit, therefore we have been told in Isaiah 55:7-9, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

When a man comes to God, God says, "You must forsake your ways and your unrighteous thoughts, for your ways and your thoughts simply won't work in the spiritual realm." But, why not? "Because my thoughts and ways are higher than yours." Just how high are God's thoughts and ways? "As high as the heavens are above the earth."

You see, a part of salvation is forsaking our ways and our thoughts, and accepting God's ways and God's thoughts. And that, my friend, is living by the laws of the "heavenlies." And failure comes in our Christian lives when we try to live the heavenly life by the ways and laws of the worldly life!

Remember when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Judas brought the soldiers in to arrest Him? Peter looked around, picked up his sword and began to fight, but Jesus said to him, "Put away your sword; for all who live by the sword shall perish by the sword." And as Jesus stood before Pilate in John 18:36, "Jesus answered. My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from here."

Do you know what Peter's problem was? He was living according to the laws of this "present evil age," but Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." The laws of this world say, "Fight, defend yourself." But Jesus said, "Put aside your sword, for you are living by the wrong laws."

And that brings us to this all-important question: *What are the laws of the hevenlies, and how can I understand how to live by them?*

The answer is found in Matthew 5,6, & 7, for the Sermon on the Mount is actually the laws of the Kingdom! Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-22, “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.” And He said in Matthew 5:43, “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy.” The law of this “present evil age” says, “Love your friends and hate your enemies.” But Jesus said, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you.” The law of this world says, “The strong shall inherit the earth.” But Jesus said in Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”

You see, the problem is that we are programmed to live according to the laws of this world, but our blessings come when we live according to the laws of heaven!

The human mind is somewhat like a computer. You take a computer and you program it by feeding in a set of facts. All of the calculations and solutions that are reached by any computer, regardless of large or small, are based on the programming that it receives. If the person programming the computer makes a mistake, than all of the computer’s calculations will be wrong, and this is called in the world of computers, “Garbage in and garbage our.” With that thought in mind, Romans 12:2 says, “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good

and pleasing and perfect.” The word that has been translated “transform” is the same root word that is translated “transfigured” in Mark 9:2. The Greek word used here is “metamorphosis,” which is what a caterpillar does to become a butterfly. It is that hidden inner glory, that invisible inner nature that has been touched by the hand of God to produce something beautiful from something ugly! If we are going to be able to live by the laws of the “heavenlies” instead of the laws of this “present evil age” then we must allow God to re-program our minds!

You see, from the day you were born into this world, you were constantly fed a set of facts - you were being programmed! So when you came face to face with a problem, you took that set of facts that you had been fed all your life, and based on those facts you came up with the solution. And more times than not it was wrong!

The world’s programming goes something like this. When you come to a four-way stop, and when it is your turn to go and that other car goes first, then you start to compute the facts that you have been fed all your life, which says, “Don’t let anyone get ahead of you, if it is your turn.” And with lightening speed the solutions returns to cause you to go into a fit of anger, and then says, “Blow your horn.” Louder!” Somebody says something you don’t like, and you get your feelings hurt, you start to compute the set of facts that you have been fed all your life, and with lightening speed you get the answer, “Strike back as fast as you can. Look for a weakness and strike back.” You see, every failure in your Christian life is because you have been computing, and/or living on an old set of facts, that are based on the laws of this “present evil age,” instead of the laws of the “heavenlies.”

This truth is seen in the case of the twelve spies that were sent out by Moses to see if the children of Israel could possess the land of Canaan, and when they returned “Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said. Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” But the other ten spies said, “The people are strong that well in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and, moreover...we saw giants, the sons of Anak, who come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.” How is it that twelve people can go and see the same things, hear the same things, feel the same things, and taste the same things, and yet draw such different conclusions? I will tell you how - because one group was calculating on one set of facts, while the other group was calculating on another set of facts.

The problem with the ten spies that were afraid was that although they were out of Egypt, they were still thinking like Egyptians, they had not been reprogrammed. And so, their set of facts were fed into their minds, and the answer that they received was simply this, “Grasshoppers can’t whip giants. Therefore, the mission is impossible.” But Caleb and Aaron had a new set of facts that said, “With God all things are possible, and God has already given us the victory.”

That is why we have been told in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.” When we are saved, we must allow the Word of God to reprogram our minds!

Third, because of our covenant relationship we have heavenly principles. The covenant principles that we are to live by are these:

you gain by giving; you live by dying; and you are set free by becoming a slave.

You gain by giving. 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 says this, “Remember this - a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say, “They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.” For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.” I like the way verse 8 reads in the Living Bible, “God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything you need and more, so that there will not only be enough for your needs, but plenty left over to give joyfully to others.”

The laws of this “present evil age” say, “Get all you can, and can all you get.” Our new set of facts say, “The more you give for the glory of God, the more you get in return.”

You live by dying. Galatians 2:20 says, “ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved

me and gave Himself for me.” Child of God, there is no life outside of Jesus Christ!

You are set free by becoming a slave. Jesus made us this promise in John 8:32, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” You see, the child of God knows something that the world does not know, and His name is Jesus!

Listen to me tonight - There is not a need in your life that Christ cannot meet. There is no problem that Christ cannot solve. There is no difficulty in your life that Christ cannot help you to overcome. But you must be willing to live the heavenly life while here on this earth!

