

The Two Essentials

By Jim Hohnberger

"Except a corn or wheat fall into the ground and **die**, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24 Jesus often used illustrations in nature to teach us the way of life. Let me illustrate. Take the life of the great oak tree. How was the oak tree born? In a grave. The acorn was planted in the ground, a grave was made for it, that the acorn might die. It **died and disappeared**. Henceforth it lives and stands rooted in it's grave. If it had a choice and wanted to leave the ground it was buried and rooted in, it would surely die. But no, it lives hundreds of years growing higher and stronger and broader and more beautiful in the very grave where it had died. And all the fruit it bears and all the foliage it produces year after year, it owes to that grave in which its roots and life are cast and kept.

Oh, let us live every day, every hour of the day, every moment of the day, rooted in Calvary. Let us not merely assent to Calvary, let us not merely speak of Calvary but let us enter into a true Calvary experience. No, we cannot die **for** sin, only Christ could do that, but we can consent to die **to** sin. We can choose, by the powerful grace of God, through a living faith, to continually say yes to God and no to self. To my own will, I will die; to human wisdom, and human strength, and to the world I will die; for it is in this death to self, my grave, that His life in me, has its beginnings and its fulfillment. We can read about it in Galatians 2:20, "I am **crucified** with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."

Death is a solemn thing, an awful thing. In the garden it cost Christ great agony to die that death. No wonder it is not easy for us. But we must willingly consent to find our life everyday at Calvary. The apostle Paul said, "I Die Daily." I Corinthians 5:31 We must, in order to live the true Christian experience die to self everyday. It is by **faith** that we "reckon ourselves dead to sin and self and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:11 Then, we must by God's grace, through a living faith consent not to yield ourselves throughout the day to sin and selfishness, but instead to yield ourselves unto God. This is what is meant by Paul in II Corinthians 4:10, "**always** bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." You see there is not just a one time reckoning of ourselves dead to sin and selfishness, but a daily Calvary experience, where we agree to bury the Self life at the beginning of our day. Then there must be a **continuous** reckoning throughout the day of our wills dead to all that is sinful and selfish. In every situation we must find ourselves saying, as Christ did, "Not My Will but Thy Will be done." Luke 22:42

It is through this **constant surrender** to God that we are enabled to live the new life, the life of faith. This warfare against **self**, the surrendering of **all** to the will of God, and then the continuous yielding of **all** to the will of God

throughout the day, is the first essential. This is what it means to live our life rooted in Calvary. Oh let us live every hour of the day, rooted in Calvary and by faith say, "to my own will, I will die: to human wisdom and human strength, and to the world I will die." And now by the grace of God we can live according to His will and His principles as revealed to us in His Word, His guidelines for our every thought, word and action.

It is a rule of the Christian life that, only in **death** is there to be found life. This is the meaning of baptism. It symbolizes going down into a watery grave and then coming up out of that grave cleansed of the old self life and now living a new life altogether, by the power and strength of Jesus our Saviour.

This new life is not to be found in ourselves. It can be found only in a continual receiving of Jesus Christ. For He alone has the power to enable us to live the new life, this life of continual faith. "But as many as **received** Him, to them gave He **power** to become the sons of God." John 1:12 This is the second essential. After death there must be life and this life can only be found in a continuous abiding experience day by day, hour by hour, In Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Yes, a total dependency on a power outside of ourselves, and that power is Christ. The initial receiving of Christ is not sufficient. No, there must be a continuous ongoing receiving of Christ, who is now our con-

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tinual source of strength and life. John 15:4 says it so well, "Abide in **Me**, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Here again, Christ uses nature to illustrate the true Christian experience. How long can a branch bear fruit if it is severed from the vine? It begins to die immediately. This is the same with us, if we choose to think impure thoughts, to give way to irritations or gossip, or to indulge our appetites and passions, we cease to abide in Christ. And, "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." I John 5:12 How vitally important it is then, that we never consent to let go of Christ, for it is only as we abide in Him that we have life, strength and power to live the new life, even this life of contin-

ual faith. Always trusting, always yielding to God's will and way. Always saying **yes** to God and **no** to Self. This is an attitude of total dependency at all times and in all places upon our Saviour, Jesus Christ. And what does He save us from? Ourselves! From our sinful, selfish ways. This is why He came and lived in our flesh, to show us how to live. His life was a life of total dependency on His Father. He said, "I can of my own self do nothing." John 5:30 He also says to us, "Without **Me** ye can do nothing." John 15:5 We can only live the true Christian life if we surrender **all** to Him and then place our absolute dependency in Him every hour of every day for the rest of our lives. This

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But friends, most of us have been trying to live the "Christian life" without a fresh and continual receiving of Christ everyday of our life.

We are instructed in Romans 13:14 to, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." When you arose this morning, did you, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ?" If not, then you have not life. You may have membership in a church, an intellectual knowledge of spiritual things, an outward compliance, a verbal assent to truth, but you do not have life.

"He that hath the Son hath life." I John 5:12 To have Christ means, we **abide in Him** continually. All our thoughts, all our words, all our actions are filtered through Him, before they find expression. We simply cannot live the true Christian life without

personal contact with Christ every hour of the day, this is the second essential. It's like a trolley car, it only has power as long as it is connected and continues to remain connected.

I would like to illustrate these two essentials from my own experience. I was upstairs at my desk, writing a sermon, when my oldest son walks in the room with his arm full of his math books. "Father, you need to solve a problem. Mother and the answer book say my answer is wrong, I say it's right." Here I was deep in thought and not wanting to be disturbed. My flesh wanted to say, "Go away, not now, solve your own problem, I don't have time, can't you see I'm busy." Friends, a surrendering **all** to

the will of God requires a struggle, but there must be a continuous death to my will and way, and a continuous holding onto Christ. What would I do? Would I consent to say no to self and yes to God? Would I consent to hold onto Christ and in His strength, submit my will instead of following inclination? I praise God, I submitted my will to His will, I looked up at my son and said, "Let's have a look at it." And to my surprise and his elation the answer book was wrong, probably a miss print. This whole situation took only 10 minutes to resolve, I remained in Christ, my son saw by example what it means to die to self and live to Christ.

This union with Christ by living faith is enduring. Every other union must perish. True Christians will choose Christ as First and Last and Best in everything. But friends, this union will cost us something. It is a union of utter dependence at all times and in all places. This is no casual touch, no off and on connection. It must be as the branch is to the vine; always connected, or we will not be enabled to bear true fruit to His honor or glory.

These two essentials of Death to Self and Life in Christ are well illustrated throughout scripture. Perhaps II Corinthians 4:11 summarizes them best, "For we which live are **always** delivered unto **death** for Jesus sake, that the **life** of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." This true Christian experience is only in virtue of our full and continuous surrender of self to God and then our connection and utter dependency in Christ for wisdom and

strength to live this new life even this life of faith. May God help us see it and enter into it!

Power for Living



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