

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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IN HIS LIFE —
FROM
NATURALNESS

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Living Stream Ministry

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The book of Romans may be summarized in three words: redemption, life, and building. The first chapters cover redemption, the middle portion covers life, and the last part deals with the building, which is the issue of redemption and life. After being saved, justified, and reconciled to God, we still need to be saved in Christ's life ([Rom. 5:10](#)). Redemption, justification, and reconciliation have been accomplished by the death of Christ on the cross. Through Christ's death, the problems between us and God on the negative side have been solved. But God's purpose on the positive side must still be fulfilled. God's purpose is not merely to save us from hell or from His judgment; His purpose in the universe is to build up the Body as the corporate expression of His Son. For this reason, the book of Romans does not stop with redemption or justification, but proceeds onward to reach the goal of God's eternal purpose.

The unique way God uses to fulfill His purpose is life. In [chapter five](#) the matter of life is introduced in an experiential way. In [5:10](#) Paul

says, “For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in His life.” Notice the tense here: we shall be saved in His life. After reconciliation, there is still the need for us to be saved in life. Although we have been saved already, we still need to be saved. On the one hand, we have been saved from hell and from the judgment of God. This was accomplished once for all through the death of Christ on the cross. But, on the other hand, we still need to be saved from so many present problems. Many Christians are waiting to go to heaven. However, if they were suddenly transported to heaven, upon arriving there they might feel that they are not suitable for the glory of heaven. Heaven is glorious, but in many respects we still are so low. Are you pleased with the way you are today? Are you satisfied with yourself? I am glad that I am still in the process of Christ’s ongoing salvation. I need to be saved because I am still too much in my natural life. Although I do not want to be in the natural man and earnestly endeavor to be free from my natural man, I must confess that I am still natural. Therefore, I need to be saved daily and even hourly in the life of Christ from my natural man.

IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST

According to [5:10](#), we need to be saved *in* Christ's life. We are saved not only *by* His life, but also *in* His life. Life is the Person of Christ Himself. In the Gospel of John the Lord said definitely and emphatically, "I am...the life" ([14:6](#)). Therefore, to be saved in His life is actually to be saved in the Person of Christ Himself.

The salvation of Noah and his family in the ark is a type of our being saved in Christ. Noah and his family were saved not *by* the ark but *in* the ark. Today, as believers in Christ, we are in Him as today's ark. Christ is our life, and we are in Him. In Him we are being saved. As long as we are in Him, we are in the process of being saved in His life.

We have seen that we are saved in Christ's life from the law of sin. The law of sin works in us spontaneously and automatically. There is no need for us to strive in order to tell lies or to lose our temper. The telling of lies and the losing of temper are an automatic product of the spontaneous working of the law of sin. Nevertheless, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus frees us from the law of sin and of death ([Rom. 8:2](#)). As long as we are in Christ as life, we are spontaneously freed by the law of His life from the law of sin and of death.

We are also saved in Christ's life from worldliness. This means that in His life we are sanctified, separated from the world. We all were born into a worldly situation and were then trained to be worldly. The tendency to be worldly is in our nature. Therefore, we need to be in the divine life in order to be delivered from worldliness. This divine life separates us from worldliness and sanctifies us both positionally and dispositionally. We cannot be saved from worldliness by following certain religious instructions or regulations such as those found among certain religious groups. At most, adherence to such rules can produce only an outward, positional sanctification. The sanctification spoken of in Romans, however, is not merely positional; it is also dispositional, an inward matter that affects the depths of our being. In the life of Christ we are being sanctified inwardly.

A METABOLIC CHANGE

Along with being saved from sin and from worldliness, we need to be saved in life from naturalness. This means that we need to be transformed. We need not only an outward change, but also an inward change. This inward change is called transformation. Transformation involves a metabolic change in our being. A new element,

a divine, holy, heavenly element, must be added to our natural element to produce a metabolic, organic change. The result of such a change is transformation.

Suppose a person with a pale complexion puts makeup on his face in order to improve his color. Such a change is outward; it is definitely not the result of inward transformation. God's way is different. Firstly, He washes away our sins in order to fulfill His righteous requirements. Then, in transforming us, He is not primarily concerned with our outward appearance, but with what we are organically. To continue the illustration of makeup, the best way to improve our facial color is not to put on makeup but to eat nourishing food. This food will cause an organic change that will eventually improve our color. This change is transformation. By inward transformation our outward appearance will change.

THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY

This organic transformation has very much to do with the building up of the Body. Although we have been reconciled to God through the death of Christ, we still are very natural. In the church life we have believers of many different nationalities: Americans, Chinese, Mexicans, Japanese,

Filipinos, British, French, Germans, Koreans, Ghanaians. However, if we remain in our natural status, we cannot be the Body of Christ. How can the Chinese be built up with the Japanese, or the Westerners with the Easterners? Nevertheless, in the Body of Christ we must be one and be built up together. For this, we need to be transformed.

By nature, we all are either male or female. However, even this natural distinction causes problems in the church life. A brother who uplifts his male status will cause problems to the sisters in the church life. Therefore, even with respect to being male and female, we need to be transformed for the building up of the Body. If we remain in our natural life, we simply cannot be built up with others. If we are natural, the brothers cannot be built up with the sisters, nor the sisters with the brothers. Furthermore, if the sisters are not transformed, they cannot be built up with one another. In our natural status, whether male or female, we are not capable of being built up as the Body. Again we see that we need to be transformed, to be saved in the life of Christ from our naturalness.

In speaking with the saints or in answering their questions, I am afraid of being natural. I do not want to be in my natural disposition. Do you know what disposition is? It is simply our natural

expression, our natural being. Our disposition is what we are by nature. How can the church be built up if we remain in our natural disposition? How can those who differ in their disposition be built into one? Without transformation, it is impossible. Some who have realized this have become so disappointed that they have thought it hopeless to have the church life in a practical way. At such times, they have even considered giving up the church life. However, there is no way for us to go back. The “train” on which we are riding goes only in one direction; it never goes backward. Even when we are disappointed, the “train” of the church life carries us onward. We have no choice but to go on. This is our destiny. We were born for this and even predestinated for it. We simply have to go along with what the Lord is doing in the church life today.

ALL THINGS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Some have told me that they were tired of being Christians and no longer wanted to be Christians. But once you have become a Christian, it is impossible to stop being a Christian. The universe is not under our control. We are creatures, and certain decisions concerning us were made before we were born. It was not we who decided to be born

into this world. This matter was of God. This is His universe and His earth, and we are His people. According to God's economy, as typical human beings, we must be Christians. As Christians, we have seen that we must be in the church life. Since we have no choice in this matter, let us simply place ourselves into the transforming hand of God and allow Him to do His transforming work within us. Those of us who are married have just the wife or husband we need. Furthermore, in the church life we have the very brothers and sisters we need. All the dear ones in the church are necessary for our transformation. The Lord is sovereign, and we must worship Him for His sovereignty. He is never wrong. Sometimes I am tempted to be impatient with the slowness of certain brothers or with mistakes they have made under the Lord's sovereignty. At such a time the indwelling Spirit reminds me that all this is for my transformation. At other times I am reminded, perhaps by my wife, that God causes all things to work together for our good. All things work together for good in the way of transformation. We need this transformation in order to be saved from our naturalness.

THE RENEWING OF THE MIND

[Romans 12:2](#) tells us to be transformed by the

renewing of the mind. The source of our trouble is our mind, which has been saturated and permeated with all kinds of natural concepts. This mind filled with natural concepts is the cause of the trouble in the building up of the Body. The brothers, the sisters, the old, and the young all have their concepts. Furthermore, those born in the Orient have their concepts, and those born in the West have theirs. How can we be built up together if we hold on to our differing concepts? For the building of the Body, we need the renewing of our mind. We need to drop not only non-Christian concepts, but also Christian concepts, the concepts we took in when we were in the denominations. Denominations are divisions formed according to various concepts. Now that the Lord, in His mercy, has brought us together for the church life, we need the renewing of the mind. We need to be inwardly unloaded of our concepts. This is related to the growth in life. The more we grow in life, the more we shall be saturated by life. Then this life will transform our mind organically. Spontaneously the concepts will be swallowed up by the growth of the life within.

We have learned not to argue with the saints regarding their concepts. Instead, we should pray for them and minister life to them so that they

may grow. As the saints grow, they experience transformation in the soul by the renewing of the mind. By growing together in this way in the life of Christ, we eventually come to have one mind. Then we are one, not according to concept, but according to the inner life.

MINISTERING LIFE

If a brother or sister holds a dissenting concept, you should not try to convince that one to change it. The more you attempt to convince him, the stronger the dissenting concept will be. The best way to help such a one is to allow the inner life to solve his problem. Suppose you cut your arm. After applying medicine to the wound, leave the wound alone and let it heal itself. However, if you tamper with the injury, you will only delay the healing. The life in the body will eventually take care of the wound. Likewise, the best way to care for a dissenting one is to do nothing. If the problem is left alone, he will sooner or later become dissatisfied with his dissenting. Instead of correcting him or trying to change him, minister life to him. What the brothers and sisters need is the inward, organic supply of life. You can minister life to someone without even saying much to him. Simply by looking at him you

can transfuse the life into him. Do not speak to others according to the tree of knowledge. Instead, exercise your spirit to transfuse life from your spirit into them. This life, which is the living Christ Himself, will work within them to transform them inwardly. Eventually, the inner life will renew their minds, and they will be transformed. Then the dissenting concepts will be swallowed up.

Today, for the building up of the church, we need to experience this kind of transformation. The more we are transformed, the more we are saved in the life of Christ. May we all pray that the Lord will grant us a genuine inner, organic transformation. This is our need today.

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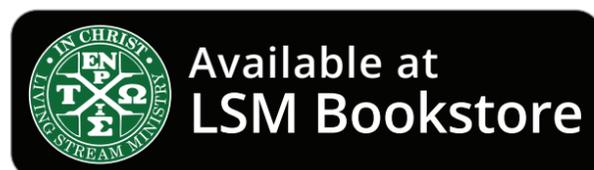
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