

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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Living Stream Ministry

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A GRAFTED LIFE

God's economy is a matter of the dispensing of the divine life into our being. As a result of this dispensation, we, the chosen people of God, have both the human life and the divine life. Every kind of life, even the lowest plant life, is a mystery. No scientist can fully explain how a little seed grows into a beautiful flower. Within the seed there is an element of life that brings forth a flower with a certain shape and color. How wonderful!

THE MOST WONDERFUL CREATED LIFE

Among the various forms of created life, the most wonderful is the human life. Contrary to the opinion of many, the angelic life is not more wonderful than the human life. It is wrong to think that angelic life is better than human life. God did not ordain the angelic life to contain the divine life. Rather, He created the human life to be the vessel for the divine life. Although you may consider yourself inferior to the angels, God considers you better than angels. Nevertheless,

subconsciously some, especially sisters, may desire to be angels. The Bible, however, does not speak of God's love for angels, but it reveals His love for man. Angels are simply God's servants. In His eyes, the most wonderful life among all His creatures is the human life.

[Genesis 1:26](#) says, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Hence, the angels were not created in the image and likeness of God, but man was. Do you realize that you were made in the image of God and according to God's likeness? We are not descendants of apes, but are descendants of the man created in the image of God. Simply by having the image of God and by bearing the likeness of God, we look like God. This is the clear revelation in the holy Word. Because man was created according to God, the human life is the best of all created lives. Therefore, we can be proud of the fact that we are human beings. Praise the Lord that we are men and not angels!

IMAGE, LIKENESS, AND REALITY

One day, through the incarnation of Christ, God Himself became a man. In this way God identified Himself with man. Jesus, God incarnate, was both God and man. The incarnation

of Christ not only brought God down to man's level, but it also uplifted man to God's level. By creation man had both the image of God and the likeness of God, but he did not have in him the reality of God. The incarnation brought the reality of God into man. The Lord Jesus had not only God's image and likeness; He also embodied the reality of God, for God was in Him. In principle, the same is true of everyone who has been regenerated. As regenerated persons, we not only bear the image of God and have the likeness of God, but we also have within us the reality of God.

A VESSEL TO CONTAIN GOD

The Bible reveals that man was created as a vessel to contain God. In [Romans 9:21](#) Paul speaks of vessels to honor and in [9:23](#), of vessels of mercy prepared unto glory. God Himself is the real honor and glory. Therefore, the fact that we are vessels to honor prepared unto glory means that we have been designed to contain God as our honor and glory.

We may use a glove as an illustration of man as a vessel, a container, of God. Because the purpose of a glove is to contain the hand, the glove is made in the likeness of the hand. The hand has a thumb and four fingers, and the glove also

has a thumb and four fingers. Although the glove is not the hand, it is made in the likeness of the hand in order to contain the hand. In the same principle, man is a vessel to contain God. For this reason, he was made according to the likeness of God.

If you put your hand into a glove designed for it, your hand will feel comfortable in the glove. In like manner, God feels comfortable in man. However, He would not feel comfortable in an animal or even in an angel. Only in man does God feel at home, at rest. Heaven may be God's temporary dwelling place, but His real home is man.

We are all "gloves" designed to contain God as the divine hand. We were made in a form that is suitable to be the place of God's dwelling. God has a mind, a will, and emotions, and we do too. As humans, we should not be jellyfish, beings without a strong will. A proper human being must not only have a mind and a will, but also be full of emotion. We should find it easy to laugh or to weep. We should not be like statues incapable of expressing feeling no matter what the situation may be. The Bible reveals that God is rich in emotion. He hates, He loves, and He becomes angry. According to [John 11:35](#), the Lord Jesus, God incarnate, wept. Therefore, to be a vessel to

contain God, man was created with emotions. Emotion is extremely important, for God Himself is rich in emotion; He is not a God of stone.

All of man's virtues are created according to God's attributes. For example, human kindness is an image of God's kindness. The same is true of gentleness. Man's gentleness is according to the likeness of the gentleness of God.

THE CAPACITY TO BE GODLY

We are "gloves" in the likeness of the divine hand. This means that we do not have the thumb, but the form of the thumb; not the fingers, but the likeness of the fingers. For example, our gentleness is a container for God's gentleness. Our gentleness is only the form, whereas God's gentleness is the substance, the reality. Because we were created according to the likeness of God, we have the capacity to be godly, that is, to be like God. Animals can never be godly, for they are not in the likeness of God and cannot contain Him. But in our love, kindness, and gentleness we can show forth godliness, God-likeness.

In His creation of man, God made man as a vessel to contain Him with the intention of coming into this vessel and filling it with Himself. When God enters into the vessels created by

Him, He finds that the vessels are a proper match for Him. He has emotion, and His container has emotion also. Therefore, in the container God has a place to put, to dispense, His own emotion. In this way human emotion and divine emotion become one. The divine emotion is the content, and the human emotion is the container and the expression.

Although this revelation is in the Bible, not many have seen it. We praise the Lord that in His recovery this revelation has been made more than clear. No more are we veiled to the fact that man is a vessel to contain God and that God feels at home in such a wonderful vessel. If we see this, then we shall be able to understand the subject of this booklet: not an exchanged life, but a grafted life.

DISPENSATION, NOT EXCHANGE

We have seen that when the divine life enters into the human life, the divine life becomes the content and the human life becomes the container and the expression. But there is no exchange, or trade, of lives. This means that we do not exchange the human life for the divine life. Instead of exchange, there is a dispensation. The empty glove is filled with the hand. Using another figure

of speech, we may say that man is like a tire that needs to be filled with air. The air is dispensed into the tire and fills it, but the air is not exchanged for the tire. In like manner, the divine air, the heavenly *pneuma*, is dispensed into us, but it is not exchanged for our human life. Rather, as we shall see, it is dispensed into us and mingled with us.

Some Christian teachers regard the Christian life as an exchanged life. According to this concept, our life is poor and Christ's life is superior. Therefore, the Lord asks us to give up our life in exchange for His. We yield our life to Him, and He replaces it with His own life. However, our Christian life is not an exchanged life. It is altogether a matter of the divine life dispensed, infused, into our human life. This is a basic concept in the Scriptures.

VESSELS OF HONOR AND GLORY

In the book of Romans Paul uses three illustrations to show the dispensation of the divine life into us. In each illustration we see that the Christian life is not an exchanged life. The first illustration is that of vessels. When a certain content is placed in a vessel, an exchange does not take place. On the contrary, there is a dispensation of

the content into the vessel. The vessel may be earthy, not at all honorable or glorious, whereas the content is altogether honorable and glorious. When such a content is dispensed into the earthy vessel, the vessel becomes a vessel of honor, a vessel of glory. This is not exchange; it is dispensation.

A UNION OF LIFE

Paul's second illustration is that of married life. Marriage is not an exchange of life, but a union of life. In marriage, the husband becomes the very person of the wife. For this reason, the wife takes her husband's name as her own.

In weddings throughout the world, the bride's head is covered. This indicates that in the marriage union there can be just one head. Hence, marriage is a union of two persons under one head. In such a union there is no trade or exchange but identification. The wife is to identify herself fully with her husband. In this union, this identification, the wife is one with the husband, and the husband is one with the wife. This is a union of life, not an exchange of life.

In [7:4](#) Paul speaks of our being married to Christ: "So that, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ,

that you might marry another, even Him who has been raised from among the dead.” Christ is our Husband, and we are His Bride. Between the Bridegroom and the Bride there is no exchange of life. Instead, there is a wonderful union. We are one with Him in person, in name, in life, and in existence. If a man and wife are to have a proper marriage, they must learn to be one in such a way. Likewise, our Christian life is a life of identification with Christ and oneness with Him.

GRAFTING

Because neither the illustration of the vessel nor that of married life picture anything organic related to God’s dispensation, Paul goes on to use a third illustration—the grafting of one tree to another. In [11:17-24](#) Paul uses the illustration of branches from a wild olive tree being grafted into a cultivated olive tree. As a result of grafting, the branches from the wild olive tree and the cultivated olive tree grow together organically. Each tree has its own life, but now these lives grow organically together and have one issue.

A surgeon may do what is called a skin graft. In this procedure healthy skin is transplanted from one part of a patient’s body to a wound or burn elsewhere in his body to form new skin. After

the graft is completed, the transplanted skin will grow organically with the tissue to which it has been grafted. This growth is possible because both the skin and the tissue have life. The organic element in the life enables them to grow together.

In Romans Paul uses the illustrations of vessels, married life, and grafting. The illustration of the vessels shows that we are God's containers with God as our content. The illustration of marriage shows that a man and a woman with different minds, emotions, wills, personalities, characters, and dispositions are joined to form one unit. The illustration of grafting shows that two lives are joined and then grow together organically.

A stanza in a hymn written by A. B. Simpson (*Hymns*, #482) speaks of grafting:

This the secret nature hideth,
Harvest grows from buried grain;
A poor tree with better grafted,
Richer, sweeter life doth gain.

No doubt, when Mr. Simpson wrote this hymn, he had [Romans 11](#) in mind. I do not believe that A. B. Simpson would teach that the Christian life is an exchanged life. According to this hymn, he realized that it is a grafted life, a life in which two parties are joined to grow organically.

THE GRAFTING OF SIMILAR LIVES

In order for one kind of life to be grafted to another, the two lives must be very similar. For example, it is not possible to graft a branch from a banana tree to a peach tree. However, it is possible to graft some branches from a poorer peach tree to a healthy, productive peach tree, for the lives of these two trees are very close to each other. We may apply this principle to the dispensation of the divine life into man. The divine life cannot be grafted with the life of a dog, because there is no resemblance whatever between these lives. But because our human life was made in the image of God and according to the likeness of God, it can be joined to the divine life. Although our human life is not the divine life, it resembles the divine life. Therefore, these lives can easily be grafted together and then grow together organically.

In the line of the hymn by A. B. Simpson, the poor tree is grafted to a better tree to gain a richer, sweeter life. The life of the poor tree does not disappear. Rather, it grows together as one unit along with the life of the rich, sweet tree. Once again we see that this is not an exchanged life, but a grafted life.

UPLIFTED THROUGH GRAFTING

Furthermore, according to the natural law ordained by God, it is not the poor life that affects the richer life but the richer life that affects the poor life. In fact, the rich life will swallow up all the defects of the poor life and thus transform the poor life. In the same principle, when we are grafted into Christ, Christ swallows up our defects, but He does not eliminate our own life. On the contrary, as He swallows our defects, He uplifts our humanity. He uplifts our mind, will, emotion, and all our virtues.

DISPENSING, MINGLING, AND ABIDING

In [John 14:20](#) the Lord Jesus said, “In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” The day spoken of here is the day of Christ’s resurrection. In this verse the Lord was saying that on the day of His resurrection His disciples would know that He is in the Father, that they are in Him, and that He is in them. This is not an exchange of one life for another—it is a mingling of lives. The Lord is in us and we are in Him. This is the mingling that comes from the dispensing, the infusing, of the life of the Triune God into us.

The mingling spoken of in [John 14:20](#) is like the mingling of the oil with the fine flour in the meal offering ([Lev. 2](#)). The fine flour is in the oil, and the oil is in the fine flour. This is mingling.

Mingling leads to mutual abiding. Therefore, in [John 15:4](#), the Lord Jesus said, “Abide in Me and I in you.” This mutual abiding of us in the Lord and the Lord in us is what we mean by a mingled life. Moreover, this mingled life is a grafted life.

ONE LIFE WITH ONE LIVING

[John 6:57](#) says, “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me shall also live because of Me.” Here the Lord says that He lives because of the Father. This word indicates that two Persons live by one life and have just one living. The Son and the Father are two, but They do not live two lives, nor do They have two livings. They have one life with one living. The Son lives by the Father, and the Father lives through the Son. In this verse the Lord also says that he who eats Him will also live because of Him. This indicates that just as the Son and the Father are two Persons with one life and one living, so we and the Son should have one life with one living. Once again we see that this is a grafted life, not an exchanged life.

In [Galatians 2:20](#) Paul speaks of his own Christian experience. In this verse Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ and that Christ now lives in him. Again we see two persons, Christ and Paul, with one life and one living.

SWALLOWING UP OUR DEFECTS AND SHORTAGES

We have pointed out that the better life swallows up the defects and shortages of the inferior life. This means that the divine life will swallow up the defects and shortages of our human life. This is possible because in Christ's life there is the killing power of His crucifixion. Remember, Christ's life has been processed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Now His life includes all these ingredients. We may use antibiotics as an illustration of this. Just as antibiotics kill disease germs, so the killing element in the life of Christ terminates the negative things in us.

We may prefer simply to yield up our human life and have it be replaced with Christ's life. We may feel that our life is full of "germs" and would therefore like it replaced by the divine life. This may be our way, but it is not God's way in His economy. His way is for Christ's life to swallow

up all the defects, shortages, and “germs” within us. The more we tell the Lord Jesus that we love Him and that we want to be one with Him, the more we shall experience the killing power in the spiritual antibiotics.

All the elements we need are available in Christ’s life. In His life there is the killing element as well as the nourishing element. You may be discouraged about your disposition. But Christ’s life will kill the negative element in your disposition and then, instead of casting your disposition away, Christ will uplift it and use it.

THE PRINCIPLE OF INCARNATION

In their so-called prophesying, many of those in the Pentecostal denominations or in the charismatic movement are fond of imitating the Old Testament prophets who frequently said, “Thus saith the Lord.” Although this expression is used by the Old Testament prophets, it is not used by the New Testament writers. Paul wrote many Epistles, but he did not say at the end, “Thus saith the Lord.” Rather, he said, “Grace be with you,” “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit,” or simply, “The Lord be with your spirit” ([1 Tim. 6:21](#); [Gal. 6:18](#); [2 Tim. 4:22](#)). The reason for this difference is very significant. In Old Testament

times the incarnation of Christ had not yet taken place. The incarnation is a matter of God coming into man and being one with man. In the birth of Jesus, God accomplished the incarnation of Himself in man. Through Christ's death and resurrection we who believe in Christ may share in the principle of incarnation. This means that through regeneration, Christ is born into our being and becomes one with us. As Paul says in [1 Corinthians 6:17](#), "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." This means that as long as we have been born again, we are one spirit with the Lord. Now we all have the ground to declare that we are one spirit with Christ. On the day we believed, we were not only saved, but we were also married to Christ in spirit, and a union between us and Him took place. As we continue to contact Him, the superior elements of the divine life swallow up the inferior elements of our human life. Then what we say and do is spontaneously also the saying and doing of Christ. Therefore, there is no need for us to use the expression, "Thus saith the Lord." Because we have been grafted into Christ and are living in oneness with Him, our speaking is spontaneously His speaking.

[First Corinthians 7](#) illustrates this. [Verse 25](#)

says, “Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my opinion as having received mercy of the Lord to be faithful.” Paul had no commandment of the Lord regarding this matter, but he spoke as one who loved the Lord and lived out the Lord in a practical way. Then he proceeded to give his opinion. After doing so, he said, “I think that I also have the Spirit of God” (v. 40). As we read [1 Corinthians 7](#) today, we receive the whole chapter as the oracle of God, as part of God’s holy Word. Thus, Paul’s speaking became God’s oracle because Paul was one with the Lord. According to the principle of incarnation, Christ had been incarnated into Paul, and Paul lived not an exchanged life but a grafted life. This enabled him to speak in oneness with the Lord.

GOD’S REVELATION AND OUR EXPERIENCE

May we all be impressed with the fact that the Christian life is not a matter of exchange, but a matter of grafting. A lower life, our human life, is grafted into a higher life, the divine life. The higher life swallows the defects and infirmities of the lower life. As this takes place, the higher life spontaneously enriches, uplifts, and transforms

the lower life. How marvelous! This is not our doctrine or opinion; it is the divine revelation in the Word of God. Furthermore, this revelation can be supported by our Christian experience. Therefore, according to God's revelation and according to our experience, we see that as Christians today we have a wonderful grafted life.

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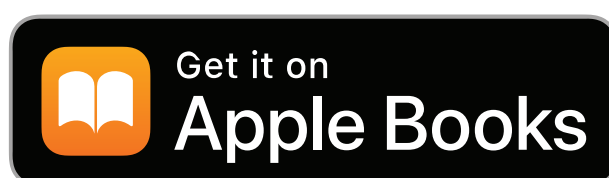
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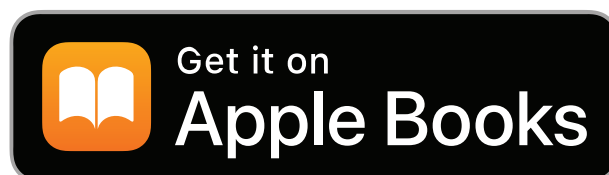
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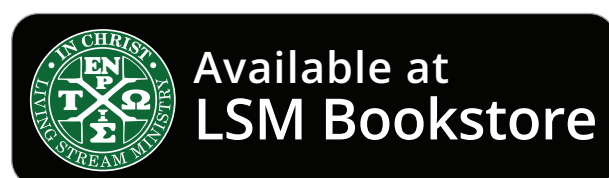
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