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Where Do I Live Spiritually?

Introduction

On the surface, the question in the heading seems very straightforward. I live in Canada, others live in Ireland, France, India, etc. However, I am not asking where an individual lives geographically but, “where do I live spiritually?” The answer to that question is, at this precise moment. Everyone spiritually lives in one of three, environments:

- a) Pre-Easter is to live without a sacrificed Christ, that is, one is unsaved.
- b) To live between Easter and Pentecost is to have eternal life, but not abundant life.
- c) Post Pentecost is to live in the power of the risen Christ, the indwelling Spirit of God, and in the peace of the abundant life the Lord promised.

It is my thoughts that perhaps most saints are like myself, living between Easter and Pentecost. Life is lived on the right side of justification but has never fully developed into the right side of sanctification, on the right side of being pardoned but never entered into the fullness of power. The result is a daily wearisome life of sinning, confessing trying to be better; sinning, confessing trying to do better; and yet resulting in constant failure.

- a) This was the experience of Paul in Romans 7:7-23. With all due determination he argues, “If I had a law to tell me what was right and wrong, if I wrote for myself a declaration of determination of what I would or would not do, then I would be a more godly believer”. Paul argues that legislation will not work for God gave a law and commandment which was “just, and good” (Rom. 7:12). Instead of helping man be more righteous, it kept convicting man of his failures.
- b) Man then seeks to do the right by self determination (Rom. 7:15, 19-23) and finds that all the determination he has does not stop him from sinning. What is the answer to this personal persistent life, saved but often helpless? Is this all that life is? Where is the abundant life the Lord spoke of?
- c) No wonder Paul wrote, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death” (Rom. 7:24). This life is making me a spiritual carcass (Rom. 8:13), unable to fully function for the greater glory of God.

The Answer

What wondrous relief when we read the word of the Spirit (Rom. 7:25-8:13). The way to that abundant life is by the resurrected Christ living in and through the individual. It is through Christ alone there is victory and as the child of God lives totally dependent on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, they will enter abundant life. That is, the saint will live the abundant life resulting in a life being lived solely for Christ the Lord.

The Danger of The Between Stage:

When the Lord released the children of Israel out of Egypt and the Egyptians’ domination, He could have brought the children of Israel to Canaan in a matter of days (Deut. 1:2) or, in approximately a two year period. During that two year period the children of Israel built the Tabernacle and God gave them the infinite blessing of directing them through the waste howling wilderness (Deut. 32:10). In grace God came to dwell with them despite their persistent idolatry (Ezek. 20:7-8, 13-16, 24, 31). For 40 years they trekked the wilderness making some 40 encampments which God graciously provided. Despite their sin of disobedience and idolatry He led them to the promised land, ever providing for them and even preserving their clothing (Deut. 8:4). They had known His power in deliverance but failed to enter His power for possession of the promised land. Unbelief hindered their pathway. The Psalmist recorded:

“We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their

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heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; And forgat his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap. In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness” (Psa. 78:4 and continues to verse 40).

Then a horrendously frightening statement was made, “Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel” (Psa. 78:41).

By being in the in-between stage, the question arises, “Can we hinder God’s purposes for us, hinder the personal increasing of His glory?” The sad answer is “Yes”. We can hinder God in us by indifference to His principles of life, by disobeying them or failing to live in the good of the sacrifice of the Lord. In tracing Israel in the wilderness we learn that just as they hindered God we also can hinder God through self will, fear, unbelief, failure, pride, and apathy. The result is, we have eternal life, but not the abundant life.

The Post Pentecost Life

What a change was made in the disciples when they really believed the Lord had risen and been glorified and the Holy Spirit of power had come. They were spiritually energized and changed from hiding in the house in fear. They were out in public preaching the risen Christ. Instead of going fishing they were out proclaiming the truth that Jesus was the Christ. The post pentecost life is a life lived in the reality of the risen Christ and an ungrieved Holy Spirit. That is the life Paul wrote to Timothy, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

However, facing reality, I must confess by my knowledge of oftentimes failure I am not writing what I have done but rather what I have learnt in these 60 plus years.

- a) How hard the first lesson has been: “that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). Sin is as reinforced wickedness deeply imbedded in me. There is this automatic response to sin as a nail to a magnet and I cannot break that power. I know the scriptures informs us, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (Rom. 6:12), but it constantly breaks out like a volcano gushing out in thoughts, language and actions.
- b) I need to want, want is too weak a word, I need to be so totally devoted to getting to know God and Christ (1 Pet. 3:18; Jn. 17:3) that nothing else must interfere with that knowledge. I must want knowledge not for the sake of knowing, but to be more aware of the presence of God every moment of every day, to be able to worship Him more faithfully.
- c) There must be the refusal to that which Peter answered the Lord saying, “Not so Lord” (Acts 10:14; 11:8) and to do whatever He asks us to do or confess.
- d) In my life of desiring abundant life, I have slowly begun to realize that I need the Holy Spirit indwelling me as a conscious reality before I can even begin the long journey. If I live without the consciousness of the risen Christ and Holy Spirit, I shall never enter the abundant life which was manifested in the Lord.

Closing Consideration

The question is: “Where do I live spiritually?”

. . . . Rowan Jennings