

# **Followers of the Way**

## **There's Life in the Son**

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### **Romans 6:1-10 & 1 John 5:1-15**

A popular destination for our summer holiday for many years was Lido di Jesolo, a town situated in North East Italy. Steve and I love this area and it is easily accessible to Venice and the surrounding Islands of Murano, Burano and Torcello. It was interesting to watch glass blowing in both Venice and Murano and also to participate in this marvellous craft ourselves!

To purchase a piece of both Venetian and Murano glass was special as we were taking a piece of history home with us! We also enjoyed walking along the beach, soaking in the warm rays of the glorious sunshine. The sun brightened the whole landscape and everyone enjoyed sunbathing and swimming in the sea.

One day, when we went walking, the picture changed dramatically. The clouds enveloped the sun and the brightness was dispelled, leaving a much duller horizon. The deck chairs were empty and very few people were around. Suddenly I exclaimed, 'There's life in the sun.' The lack of people on the beach was mainly due to the sun in the sky not shining brightly.

Then I thought about the spiritual aspect of, 'There's life in the Son.' S-O-N.

The apostle John writes much about life in the Son. Recently, I found it interesting to search for and read many of these verses. John mentions the Son over twenty times in this letter and wants to stress to his readers this important concept that Life is in God's Son. We are all familiar with one of the most famous and well quoted verses in the Bible from John 3:16, where John tells us that if we believe in Jesus we will have eternal life.

At the beginning of this epistle, John is proving to his readers that what he is about to write is the truth. The evidence is that he has seen and touched this Word of Life. Jesus declares Himself that, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.' In our reading from 1 John 5 this morning, these verses are telling us about the most important message of life in the Son. We are going to look at this gift of Life in the Son using three headings:

- God's Generous Gift of Life,
- Receive God's Generous Gift of Life and
- Enjoy God's generous gift of life.

## **GOD'S GENEROUS GIFT OF LIFE**

God's love for the world is so immense that He was willing to send His only Son to be the Saviour of the world to bring those who trust in Him from sin and death to new life.

The apostle John writes, 'God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.' Let's focus on the tense here of the verb 'to be', it is what is known as the Aorist tense. It is teaching us that this is an effective action, a successful action, a single action and a one-time action. Notice also it's not a generic promise that He has given eternal life, it states the personal pronoun 'us' - you and me.

John wants us to have the assurance of eternal life. This is both a present reality as well as a future promise for believers in Jesus alone for salvation. John's teaching here is very clear about the validity of the testimony of Jesus focusing on the water, the blood and the Holy Spirit. John Stott calls this 'the first testimony'. Then in v.10 there is a further testimony when the apostle John says, 'Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart.' This further testimony is in the believer's heart. Then in v.11 comes the full affirmation of the testimony, '...this is the testimony. God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His son.' With these three witnesses who are in complete agreement, this gives us certainty of the truth of the Gospel.

Jesus is the divine, but also human, Christ, and He is the giver of life. As David Guzik succinctly writes, 'It is all about Jesus, and living in Jesus is the evidence of eternal life.' Jesus is the only One who can give us this eternal life. There is no real life found in anyone or anything else.

Jesus died to conquer death, and because He arose from the dead, we too can live. John makes crystal clear that we need faith to receive life in the Son, and the way to prove faith is testimony. Jesus comforting His close friend, Martha, states, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies... Do you believe this?' Martha testified, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God'. Jesus is the source and creator of life and there is a paradox here; He died to conquer death, and because of His resurrection He lives for evermore, and we can also. If Jesus is Lord in our lives, then we have the Son. We can experience this life in the Son, and enjoy the best life now in the present and look forward to life eternal in the future.

The people John was writing to were already believers, but he knew the importance of sharing the message of the Gospel afresh, in order that his readers would be encouraged to continue in the faith and be certain of their eternal destiny.

I can relate to this because as a young girl my Mum kept Gospel tracts in our home and I knew, when I read them, I needed to ask Jesus to forgive my sins and invite Him to be my Saviour and Lord. Over 50 years later, when I read a Gospel leaflet like *Journey Into Life*, it is fresh, alive and compelling.

Last summer, as we were preparing for our MAGNETS Children's programme and sorting out Gospel literature for them, I read over some of these again. It is beneficial to be reminded of the Good News of the Gospel over and over again. We can easily meander through life every day with our busy schedules without engaging with these amazing truths.

#### RECEIVE GOD'S GENEROUS GIFT OF LIFE

We know that to benefit from any gift we must first of all accept it. How can we have life in the Son? Firstly, we must confess that we are sinners, believe by faith that Jesus died for our sins on the cross, as Romans 6:10 tells us, 'once for all' and rose again on the third day, then repent and turn away from our sin and invite Him to be our Saviour and Lord. Jasmine Goh writes, 'When we accept His offer of new life, we aren't the same as we were before.' After reading some of my Mum's Christian literature, I realised at around the age of 12 that I needed to confess my sin and ask Jesus to be my Saviour. God wants His children to have certainty that we are reconciled, forgiven sinners. We have a new heart and nature, the old life is crucified with Christ. Even as Christians we can have difficulties or hurts from the past or present that we haven't dealt with and we need to experience afresh this abundant life that Jesus is offering.

Those people in my introduction, who had left the beach chairs as the clouds came over, were depending on the SUN for their happiness and pleasure, many not realising their need of the One who created the SUN, waiting to offer real 'life in the SON.' Rico Tice says, 'Hearts have been won by something else. They have stopped seeing the horror of their sin, their wonder of the rescue, there is something else that has captured their heart.'

John wants his readers and us to fully understand that we can only have confidence if we are depending on Jesus alone, and not on our own performance for our salvation and eternal life. We must then be obedient in following God's commands of loving Him and one another. He wants us to display this love now in our meeting together as a Church family. John outlines this clearly when he urges, 'Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.' 1 John 4:7. Our love for the Lord should be evident in our daily lives.

#### ENJOY GOD'S GENEROUS GIFT OF LIFE

God's desire is that we enjoy this precious, generous gift of eternal life in His Son now. It is a present possession, as we know that the age to come has broken into this present age. I listened recently to Canon J. John interviewing Professor John Lennox and he asked Professor Lennox, 'What is a Christian?' He replied by saying, 'A Christian is a person who enjoys NOW a real relationship with God through Christ, through trusting Him, that He or she has not merited. Christianity is revolutionary because it tells me that I can't make it that way. I can't earn God's forgiveness but God has done something in Christ on the cross and resurrection, that He can offer me forgiveness as a free gift on the basis of my trusting Him and giving my life to Him.'

In the Gospel of John 10:10, Jesus encourages us by saying, 'I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' I like the King James Version of this using the word 'abundantly.' Are you daily experiencing this life in the Son? Jesus longs for us to come to Him and be able to enjoy living in close relationship with Himself, here and now, in the present. We cannot have a real, meaningful, worthwhile life apart from Jesus. Isn't it true we can easily be distracted by our surroundings? Our mobile phones are always close at hand and we reach out for them to constantly check our emails or messages. When we are easily distracted it is like the cloud coming over the sun in the sky. Our vision is dulled and we constantly need reminding that there is life in the Son. We cannot deny that we spend too much time doing this at the expense of digging deeper into our Bibles and having a closer relationship with the Son.

Let's focus for a few minutes on Mark 3:14, where Jesus appointed His twelve apostles, 'that they might be with Him...'. Jesus longs for us to spend more time with Him. Don't we need to emulate Mary of Bethany and be found sitting at His feet, spending those precious moments with Him and learning from Him? We ought to quietly gaze on Him and contemplate what He wants to reveal to us? As we do this, we will be changed into His likeness and, not only enjoy His generous gift of life in the Son, but be more able to make Him known to others.

A few weeks ago, when Lynn was preaching on 'Take up your cross', she mentioned a Christian friend who was coming near to the end of her physical life on earth. As Lynn looked at her friend, she commented that 'she still had life in her.' She truly had experienced life in the Son and was looking forward to seeing Him face to face very soon. Don't we need to ask ourselves, do people see Jesus shining from our lives? May we endeavour to fulfil the command of Jesus to, 'Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.' Martin Luther in his preface to his translation of the New Testament writes, 'If he has faith, the believer cannot be restrained. He betrays himself. He breaks out. He confesses and teaches this Gospel to the people at the risk of life itself.'

May we take to heart the words of Paul to his young friend, Timothy, 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).' In these end times that we are living in, we need, like Solomon, to ask God for His wisdom and discernment when we are listening to, or watching, various teaching on YouTube, or any other platforms, that we will not be misguided by any false teaching. Instead, with the right teaching and studying ourselves, we can learn new insights and refine our understanding, and when we do this the rewards are indeed incredible and our lives become transformed.

Charles Simeon states, 'For the attainment of divine knowledge we are directed to combine a dependence on God's Spirit with our own researches. Let us, then, not presume to separate what God has thus united.'

I wonder, do we fully realise and are thankful for what life in the Son really entails? God has given us everything we will ever need in Jesus. This new life means we are a child of God and we have been forgiven. We have the power of the Holy Spirit living within us. We can experience God's peace at all times. We are living in the light, as Paul tells us in Ephesians, 'For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.' We do not need to be gripped with fear any longer as, 'God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' The apostle Paul encourages us that 'we have been brought from death to life.' We have the privilege of serving Christ in His kingdom. It is encouraging, living amidst these dark times, to hear reports of many people coming to the Lord and experiencing life in the Son.

The next time we go for a walk and are enjoying the sun's rays beaming on our faces may we thank God for His generous gift of life in the Son, continue to receive it and be able to truly say, we are enjoying living life in the Son!