

The Secret of Life.

J. G. Bellett.

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(Also found as "The Mystery of Life" in "Short Meditations")

Let me say, with what force does the Spirit of God in scripture teach us the secret of life. With what an intense sense would He impress on our souls, that we have lost it, but that Christ has it for us.

The flaming sword in the hand of the Cherubim, keeping every way the way of the tree of life, was the expression of this, as soon as ever sin was committed and death brought in. That light let Adam learn, and all of us through Adam, that this life which we have lost we never can regain.

The ordinances which forbade the eating of blood, set up as soon as ever the flesh of animals was given for food, and continued and repeated jealously in the land, were a witness of the same. a standing witness, which spoke to the heart and conscience of man from the days of Noah to the times of the gospel, and perhaps indeed to this present time. (Acts 15)

The gospel teaches the same great truth abundantly. None are left with any power to question it: man is dead, dead in trespasses and sins; and he is without strength and can never recover or revive himself.

In this intense emphatic way does scripture from beginning to end let man know that he has lost life, and lost it irrecoverably.

With equal intensity is the other great secret unfolded — that life is in Christ, the Son of God, and in Him for us.

Peter was given to know this — that life was in Jesus, who was none less than the Son of God. And upon his confession (Matt. 16) the Lord goes on at once to reveal the further truth, that this life, which they owned to be in Him, was a victorious life that should be used for the church.

I stop not to give the beautiful proofs which the Lord's ministry affords of this eternal life, this victorious life, this life of the "quickening Spirit" being in Jesus all along His times here: but we see it gloriously displayed after His death. The empty sepulchre as seen in John 20: 5-7 is the peculiar witness that a conqueror had been in the regions of death; and He was then, as we know, seen of the chosen witnesses for forty days after He had risen.

But, wanting to meditate a little over the great fact that this victorious life in Jesus the Son of God is for us, I turn to the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

There He that was dead is alive again. He did not die simply to exhibit His victory, to show that He was the stronger man, though in the hands of the strong one; but His death is declared to have been for us. It tells us, as Matt. 16 had pledged, that His victorious life the Son uses for the church. He sat down having purged our sins.

He by the grace of God tasted death for every one. He by death met him that was keeping us through fear all our lifetime subject to bondage. These are the interpretations of His death which we find in the first two chapters.

At the opening of the third we are commanded to consider Him who was faithful — faithful to Him that appointed Him then to undertake to give us life through death. We are to consider Him for the

establishing of our faith and for the comfort of our souls, acquainting ourselves with this great secret, that the Son of the living God has been in conflict with death, and in the place of death, that He might bring back life to us who had lost it and lost it irrecoverably.

And as we are exhorted to consider Him, so are we farther exhorted to hold Him fast and firm and stedfast, as this same chapter proceeds.

And what is the warning — what must be the warning — after such teaching as this? "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." How simple, yet how needful, and yet how blessed! None less than the living God has been made ours in Christ Jesus; and therefore it is easy to say that our all depends on holding to Him.