

Christ the Life

John 14: 6.

W. Kelly.

He that spoke these words was the lowliest of men. How then did He come to utter them? Did ever a man since the world began take such a place? No man cometh unto the Father, but by me even as just before He had said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." There was not a word of boasting; it was never the way of Jesus to boast. Transparency was the thing that especially marked Him, and Him alone; and His love was as real as His lowliness. His was a self-sacrificing life continually. As a child it was the same; in the then single fact recorded of Him we have His own words, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And who was He that so spoke? and what entitled Him so to speak? It was not only that in Him was perfect wisdom and perfect goodness, and that He was the truth, but if He were not God (and I use the word in all its strength), how presumptuous His words!

But He was Son as no one else is son. The word of God speaks of many sons, but Jesus is the only-begotten Son of the Father. He became Captain of salvation. Was He a sinful man? He was the Saviour of sinners. How could this be if He were not a divine person? Every one else is a sinful man, every man born into the world; for Adam never had a child till he was fallen. Even Enoch was a sinful man, although in due time translated. Elijah was caught up; but of Jesus it is said that He ascended up. Now, He that ascended first descended; and He that descended is the same also that ascended up, far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Of whom else could this be true? Of none but the Lord Jesus Himself.

In Christ the full truth broke in. He came not to display the glory that He had with God; this would not at all have met the need of sinners. He who had the glory gave it up; He first emptied Himself, and then humbled Himself. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to make good the glory of God and the salvation of man. He showed in the world what it was to be here, in the face of all opposition and suffering, only to do God's will; and thus God's will was fully done by a man on the earth, and this not by power, but by obedience in suffering. Adam in Eden was not called to suffer. Jesus was the only holy man that suffered for sin. If you leave out that, you leave out the other grand pillar of the truth, that Jesus is He who was manifest in the flesh. He might have come in divine or in angelic glory, and need not have taken upon Himself the form of a man, by being born of a woman; but then how should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? And, further, if He had not, how could there have been salvation for us? It is of all importance to weigh and hold fast this truth, simple as it is. Man is a sinner, away from God, and knows it in his conscience, and owns it when he is brought face to face with God.

It is not the Bible that makes man a guilty sinner; but the Bible is the only key to all, and explains it fully and worthily. This book alone carries conviction for every heart that is willing to bow to God and be saved ; but the truth is that people do not want to be saved in God's way. They prefer the full activity of life to be their own, and to enjoy the world as long as they can. They may wish to be saved at the end, but there are many things that they feel unprepared and unwilling to give up yet. They will turn to God on their death-bed. But they feel that if saved, they must be saved to do the will of God, and not their own will; and, if saved, they are the servants of Christ. But do you want to be Satan's servants? Remember, you cannot be your own master. You must either be the servants of God or the slaves of Satan; for a man who does his own will is the slave of Satan. You may not believe this, but it is true; and a time will come when your own conscience will make you feel the truth of it, and that too

when it will be the distressing harbinger of still worse distress; perhaps, in the moment of dying. What a terrible reality to wake up then with the awful words ringing in your ears — Too late, too late, too late! But I bless God that I have the happier task of pressing on you now the way that God has opened in Jesus for you, and the truth that God proclaims to the simplest soul.

Into the midst of this world's activities, when the fourth empire was in its power, came Jesus. How did He treat this book, the Bible? As none other; it was the book of books to Him. Scripture was His food and His weapon always. It was not the New Testament yet, for this was not written then. It was the very part that high and low most try to get rid of. Men say it is the writing first of one man, and then of another, sometimes put together by a third one or more. What folly! How then has it such astonishing unity of purpose and mind? It is madness and impiety for men to speak against the book that Jesus treats as the word of God.

He who raises the dead and quickens, does not (as some think, without love) let men slip unwarned into all superstitions. The true God is a God of active love. Scripture allows no such thing as God not caring for what is going on. But you say, "Does He not allow evil?" Certainly; He let angels and men fall; but this in both was the fault of the creature only. Have you not all known, at some time or other of your life, a season when you resolved to repent and to do good? How has it turned out? Did you succeed? or have you not proved that you are bad, and can do no good thing? How comes this? Did God make man so? God made the earth and the race without one evil in either; God pronounced every thing to be very good; and evil would have been kept out if man had looked to God. But man fell; and since "the world by wisdom knew not God," the wisdom of the world does not want God. Man wants his own way and will; whereas the glory of one that knows God is to do His will. But how is God's will to be known or done? I am a sinner, know nothing, can do nothing pleasing in His eyes. The Bible read in faith explains, not merely how evil spoilt all, but how Jesus came as the way, the truth, and the life, and how He justifies God in receiving poor sinners. Grace alone can meet the need; and as He came in love to win us, so He died in the fulness of love, to give us a purged conscience, that so, reconciled to God, we might worship and serve Him. If He had left man in rebellion, it would have been a strange proof of love. Where would be grace in giving man food and all things necessary for this life, and then to let him perish for ever at last? But no; He gave His Son that the believer should not perish.

The very least thing that God made bears the stamp of His hand; and not only so, but of His mind, of His beneficent goodness. From the first God looked into man's condition, and graciously met it all, unsought and unexpected, in His grace. He sent His Son, His well-beloved, His only-begotten, the One who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. This is the One God gave for your salvation. No effort of your own avails. You have neither power nor fitness to get rid of your guilt. Have you not tried? and have you not found out that you cannot? If you have what they call an elastic conscience, you may think that God is not going to be too nice about sin. But such a thought is really a most fatal blow at His holiness and His truth, for He has declared the contrary. But God has done what is far better than slurring over your sins; He spared not His own Son.

And mark the manner of it. The Son became man, the obedient One, the only man who never sought to do his own will. Where was there ever such a sight, such a reality, before? He could say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." The very idea of such obedience was as far from every heart till Jesus came, as was God's love to lost sinners. Nor this only. Jesus, when asked, "Who art thou?" could answer, "Absolutely what also I say to you " (John 8: 25). Who could ever say this but One? Jesus always was just what He also said. Blessed truth, and how suited for God and for man! He Himself was the truth, the perfect truth, sent down to poor sin-blinded man; so that he has the truth, not only detailed in a book, but embodied in a Person, and this a man in the world tried as nobody ever

was. It is everywhere the same truth, and all is perfect harmony with the utmost variety. No doubt there are shades of distinction in many different books of the Bible, but it is surely our ignorance when we find them irreconcilable.

The mere handiwork of God is beyond the wisest of men, and the wisest are precisely those who are most ready to acknowledge their ignorance. The more men really know, the more deeply they feel and own how little they know. just so with the word of God. What are difficulties to me may not be so to some one more spiritual; and when by faith I see more clearly, the difficulties not only vanish but turn into the strongest confirmation of revealed truth. One person puts everything into its proper place — Christ. If He were not God, He could not bring into relation with God; if not a man, He would have no point of contact with me. Both are necessary for His work. It is He who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Man feels his weakness, his unworthiness, his unfaithfulness, when he judges himself before God. What life is this that Jesus is? what life did He manifest? Was it the life of Adam? Adam, we read, was made a living soul; but who and what is Christ? A quickening Spirit. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Was it of angels? No; of men. It was not merely for Israel; the pride of the Jew did not like such grace.

But let us go back to a Sabbath-day at Nazareth, when our Lord went into the synagogue, and the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, and He read those blessed words of Isa. 61, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," etc. He declared that this prophecy was that day fulfilled in their ears, stopping short in the middle of our verse 2, the point then accomplishing, as distinct from the future "day of vengeance of our God"; for when He had read so far, He shut the book and sat down, with words of grace to all. Did He speak the truth? A great deal turns on this for your souls. Was He really the One foretold by the Spirit of Jehovah, the One that God the Father had sealed? If so, your salvation turns on Him. Do not say that words of grace are hard. What? hard to be saved by God, according to the fulness of His mercy in Christ! The same Lord that saves now will be the Judge by-and-by. God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained," the same Jesus whom God hath raised from the dead. It is proof to all. Either you are in Him now, or you must stand before Him then as your judge.

Remember that, when you stand before Him as your judge, there will then be no salvation. He went down into death to bear the judgment of every one that believes on Him. Was not this infinite love? Yes; but it was more, it was righteousness. It was not by power that He met the judgment due to sinners; it was by suffering. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. This explains the way, certainty, and fulness of salvation, which would be all a myth if He were not God as well as man. There is nothing that binds all the truth together if He be not Emmanuel, God with us. The Jews will by-and-by be gathered in a different way, but it will be faith in the same Person. There is no gospel that is not grounded on Him as the sacrifice, yet a divine Person; for if He were not also a man, He could not reach me. Jesus, then, came and lived a man that He might do the will of God. What was that life? He lived on account of the Father (John 6: 57). It showed itself in unwavering subjection and constant obedience. No man ever has capacity for obedience until he becomes a partaker of that life. Without this life no man can please God in the walk of faith now, or stand in the presence of God; therefore it is of the deepest necessity.

"In this was manifested the love of God." Is it because He gave the law? No; for this brought in nothing but condemnation on guilty man. Although the law was in itself righteous, at best it made men feel their state. Love was "because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him," and this brings out the glory of His person. He was the Son of God, above, outside,

and beyond all else, both the Increate and the Creator, the eternal Word of God; and the Father would have it known. It was necessary, that the testimony should go forth, if man was to live God-ward and be blessed.

And what was the purpose for which this only-begotten Son was sent? "That we might live through him." We were hateful, and hating, serving divers lusts and pleasures, disobedient, living to ourselves. It was nothing but sin; whenever we do our own will, we sin. Being born thus, we go on accordingly; and what will be the end of it? God's glory? or exclusion from Him, eternal punishment? Ah! we want a new life. Where shall we find it? Not in Adam, but in Christ.

Adam only transmitted his own fallen nature; but in Christ we have One who only did His Father's will, and He is a life-giving Spirit — the Head of a new family. Look thus to Him and live. God declares, that whosoever believes in Him hath everlasting life, and shall be saved. What grace! And this is the sure but the only way. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

The question, then, resolves itself into this, Do I prefer my own thoughts, or the word of God? Are you now trusting in yourself, or confiding in Him? You ought to know; for if depending on your efforts, you are trusting a most miserable and broken reed. God bids me believe on Him, the only-begotten Son. Is Christ not worthy? Is God not true? He sent His Son into the world for the express purpose that we who believe might have life. Even supposing I show a desire to read His word, to pray to Him, and to do His will, what is to become of all the evil I have done, and the evil which alas! even as a believer I still feel within, and I may still fall into? For I have within me, that is, in the flesh or old nature, the tendency to pride, vanity, selfishness, self-will, temper, etc. How is a soul to be kept from yielding to these? Have you the power because you are converted? Conversion means the turning to God in your heart, mind, and ways, instead of to yourself. But what is to be done with these evil things, not only before, but after conversion, if we fall at times into them? The new life shows itself in dependence on God; and is there anything more suited to man than to look up to God? But with a bad conscience, how can one do so? In the misery of such a state, one is glad of anything that shuts out God — that keeps one from thinking of oneself and of Him.

But the grace of God has provided a remedy in the blood of Christ. The atoning work is done; but the truth is that naturally people do not want to be saved all at once. They would like to go on with the world a little longer. How deeply we need the life of Christ, in order that we may live to God, just as much as His death that our sins may be blotted out! If it were your death for your sins, you were lost for ever; if His, and you believe in Him, how blessed! He, the Eternal Life, came to die atoningly; He became a man in order that He might die for our sins. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He became a man, not only that I might partake of this life, eternal life in Him, but that He might die to take away my sins. It is God's testimony about His Son; it is His declaration of Himself, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Life is given me now in this world that I may live the life of Christ, and not according to my own old life.

The moment we have life in Christ, we have a divine sense of our sins as hateful and intolerable. You know that all you have been doing has its spring in self, in nature. But if you receive the new life, you have also in Him the efficacy of His death to meet your sins; and this is salvation. It is sad shortcoming to preach only the death and not also the life of Christ, to be satisfied with merely showing how sins may be forgiven by the blood, without a word about life in Him. It looks like man taking only what man wants; the negative relief of what clears conscience, not the positive devotedness to God. But this is not enough for the saint, still less for the glory of God. We cannot have part of the blessing, but a whole Christ. God's will is, that every believer should live in and of this new life; that is, the life of

every soul who is born again. God is better to Him than his own thoughts. The truth is that it is Christ, and not his own notions, or even conscience, that he must rest on by faith. Endued with natural life as a son of Adam, the believer has just as truly a new divine life in Christ. Is it possible to lose this new life? It is eternal life. What does "eternal" mean? But it is possible and easy to lose the joy of this life.

It is of all moment for a believer to distrust himself; but it is a wrong to God and His word, as well as weakness to self, to doubt His faithfulness, or that Christ's life does not stand for ever. If the new life in any way depended on himself, he must soon fall away into irreparable ruin. People talk of "the perseverance of the saints," as if it were they who held fast, whereas it is really they who are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." It is not then my perseverance, but divine power, that keeps me through faith.

Do you think that God does not look in compassion on the guilty sinner? Come then in the name of Jesus to Him, and confess your sins without extenuation or palliation as you could to none other. Already does He know the very worst of us. I can tell it all out to God, and even this is no small blessing to my soul, for then, for the first time, one becomes really honest, "without guile," as says Ps. 32. I need have no reserve, I can or would not keep back anything from God. Why should I wish it when there is this precious blood and water from the Saviour's side, a Saviour for all that come, who "suffered once for sins, just for unjust, that he might bring us to God"? This is the word that I would leave with you. How plain it is that the whole practical walk of believers flows from life in Christ, and is based for their peace on the blessed fact that they have been brought to God. The death of Christ takes away my guilt and bonds; but what is to be the spring of new life? How am I to mortify my old life? You may tell the old man to die, but it does not wish to die. God declares that He has given me, if a believer, another nature, new life in Christ. Nicodemus had to learn that he needed to be born afresh, not only to hear what Jesus had to teach. You may be sure that, when a soul really goes to God for its wants, he always receives through the Lord Jesus. Whenever a soul asks in faith, God fails not to give. Grace never sends empty away.

Where is the man who looked to Christ and did not find Him? Does He not say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"? He is the only way of deliverance from all danger, evil, and sin; His blood, if you believe, brings You now to God without a stain upon you. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." If you have Him you have life in Him. Mere nature is incapable of pleasing God. Faith is the means of life, pardon, peace, strength, everything for the needy; and faith lays hold of what God says and does and gives in Christ, and it is the Spirit of truth which produces faith by our hearing the word. Thus we see the importance of the Spirit applying the word to our souls. But all-important as both the word and the Spirit are, neither could avail for the soul without Christ for life, and Christ's death to take away our sins.

W. K.