
**THE RIGHT CONCEPTION
OF LIFE**



**Annual Sermon Delivered Before The Norfolk
Union Baptist Association, Clarendon,
Va., August 17, 1922**

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THE A. B. KOGER, COLLECTION

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In the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and

the same definition that have been given of them. The nature in the chapter where he speaks to the lawyer and the scribe of the law and the soul that dwelt within him. The question of human evolution shows that the evolution of the soul was a process and not a thing. It is in his mind that the soul dwelt which after he had killed with power is what we call the soul. There was solemn and weighty words. And then he took his seat with a soul and his question when he speaks of knowledge and the effect of the teaching of the parables of the Pharisee who must have had life in the world will be subject to the law of life in the world to come. For it says the Pharisee found the soul of the world to come without a mitigation of continuation of his transactions in this world, the penalty will be to him through the ages he will be taken out of the world—it shall not be taken out of the world.

THE CHALLENGE

At this time a man in the company came to him and asked him would he give the part of a man in a court of charity and cause the part of his brother to be divided or partitioned and such a way that he would not be a part of it. There is a great deal to show that he had done this.

THE RIGHT CONCEPTION OF LIFE .

“A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Luke 12:15.

In the unfolding of his hidden powers Christ was always a wonder to the astonished multitudes. The doctrines he taught were simple, but to many and even his disciples they were very serious and abstruse. There was always one thing he made reference to in his teachings that indicated its gravity and seriousness, whenever he had occasion to speak it, and that was life. He characterized life and the soul as being about the same thing however intricate each was in the

fine spun definitions that have been given of them. The instance in this chapter where he refers to the sparrow and God's watchcare of same, and then to the soul that defied human destruction or human annihilation shows that the mighty value of the soul was a supreme and over-towering thought in his mind. "Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." These were solemn and weighty words. And then next he deals with a soul and life question when he speaks of blasphemy and tells of the unending effect of the punishment of the blasphemer, who must have had life in this world and will be subject to the laws of life in the world to come. For if, says he, the blasphemer treads the awful precincts of the world to come, without a mitigation or commutation of his transgressions in this world, the penalty will cling to him through the ages, he will be sentenced in the spirit's world—"it shall not be forgiven him."

THE CHALLENGE.

At this time a man in the company came to him and asked him would he play the part of a judge in a court of chancery, and cause the property of his brother to be divided or partitioned in such a way that he would get a part of it.. There is nothing here to show that he had done anything to increase his brother's wealth, or had contributed one thing to the same. There is but one thing that seems to have been the controlling motive for such a petition, and that was covetousness, which Christ saw through and through, and then came the stern rebuke of the text. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Clearly there are two phases of the life principle set forth in the text, the negative and the positive. And now let us set our attention to this negative view of life. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth whether physical or mental. Some physical wealth may be lands, possessions, holdings, titles or garters. These are things very

tempting, things that have caused wrecks and ruins and into which thousands have plunged and lost their lives. I don't know but that the army of the misguided, deceived by the lure and attraction for wealth and fascination is not among the largest train that goes over the abyss into the whirlpool of soul ruin. So deceptive was the snare that Christ gave a special warning against it in the word: "For what shall it profit a man to gain the world and lose his own soul?" And if by some system of exchange and barter, one man should become possessor of this world —totum mundus—it would not begin to out weigh in value a soul, a life.

LIFE IS MORE THAN MATTER.

Life is not merely power or the exercise of power. Napoleon at one time had all Europe in his grin and when he started on that disastrous march to Moscow the world trembled as it watched his strides and noted his tread; yet with the power of a monarch, he learned the force of a life that was wrapped in the bandage of physical power, for while languishing as a hopeless prisoner on St. Helena, he felt that he was meaner than the poorest peon in the whole of the British realm. Life lingered but he was chained to the bleak shore of the lonely hour, awaiting death as the only door through which he should escape. If life had been power, the influence of the Corsican would be felt to this very hour. Life is not education merely, or the number of books in the library, or the diplomas hanging on the wall. Thousands have made education and learning their goal, have literally burned themselves up in the attempt to inquire into the mysteries of science and philosophy, only to discover that it is only a mirage when unsanctified by religion. Take Byron of whom it was said as a scholar he drank from every known human fountain, into every country he went in pursuit of knowledge, and yet his biographer said of him, that he was, "As some ill-guided boat well built, and tall, which angry tides cast out on desert shore, and then retiring left there to rot. His groanings

filled the land, his numbers filled; and yet he seemed ashamed to groan." Walter Scott was a man of literature, a man whose purpose in life was to see how deep into the ocean of literature he might dive so as to discover its innermost secrets and to see if in such research there might not be discovered that panacea, for a better name, we may call the satisfaction of life; but he missed it so completely, he missed the true meaning and definition of life so far that in the evening of life's day, he was heard to exclaim: "There is no rest for Sir Walter but in the grave." Life consisteth then, per se, not in the literature over which a man may be master and over which he presides. And so we might number and delineate things that the human soul has made the object of its pursuit ad infinitum without finding the thing sought if that thing was life. And more is the pity that men have not been brought to see this as they journey each day toward the country across the bar "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; and for a still better reason than has been presented, for the reason that everything unsanctified with religion and will ere long reach the barrier beyond which it cannot pass, everything but the soul, and that must cross the confines to meet its Maker.

ITS REALISM.

But positively life is something else, it is a realism as positive as God himself. Take the case in the parable employed in this connection, and you will see in the higher realm of thought the soul and God will ultimately meet. The ground of a certain man brought forth plentifully and he thought within himself what he should do to bestow his goods, that is, to house his crop for a "rainy day," and afterwards decided to tear down his barns and build larger ones; but the Master called him that night and said to him that he was a fool because he did not have the right conception of life: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." And then to

give emphasis to the immateriality of gain, or lucre such as the brother sought in the text, he asked the question, "Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" A man's life consisteth in a studied attempt in trying to conform to the laws of God, in trying to get in harmony with his mind and spirit, in trying to become the "sons of God." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God."

Now this is not a lease or a contract for a few days or a few months; but an engagement for the term of his life. Job says there is no discharge in this war. From the time one enters into the service of God as a soldier or follower, until pilgrimage ceases, he is expected to put forth every effort to demonstrate the spiritual essence, to prove that he is an heir of God. Life consisteth in rubbing the linen of christian perfection until it is thoroughly whitened; until the wrinkles of a perverted and crooked life are thoroughly ironed out, until standing in the shadow of the last change, like the dying Savior, one can triumphantly shout: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

REGENERATION.

It is the real everyday practical thing that each day is getting the mastery over the individual, until the individual is swallowed up, and virtually loses his identity in the great First Cause, until it becomes really a case of "none of self, but all of Thee."

A man's life consisteth in vital Christianity, if it is of the right kind and must reflect more and more the virtues of Christ; otherwise it is a false standard and will not bear the scrutiny and test when the Divine glare of inspection and introspection is turned upon it. The question of questions will arise: "What Is Life?" or what does a man's life consist of? And again the answer will be: that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth, but of that which is implied and is brought out in the teachings of the scriptures—a being transformed and regenerated by the spirit and power of the living. I dwell here because this is fun—

damental, and without which there is no promise held out to men in all the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

STANDARD BY WHICH MEN WOULD BE JUDGED.

Now there is one other thing of which life consists that I must speak of in this connection, and which we must remember is an essential not to be overlooked, and that is, beneficence. Strange as it may appear that this is the standard by which Christ says he will judge men at the end of the world—the measure of our conduct in doing good toward our fellow men. In Matthew He says when He comes again He will throw on His searchlight after this manner: "I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and ye clothed me, sick and in prison and ye visited Me;" and when these shall make reply, asking when this was done, His answer shall be: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my little ones, ye have done it unto Me."

Doing good then is a means of life. This can be done in many ways. We can be good doers in so far as the Christian work in the church is concerned. It is our bounden duty to do good to the "household of faith," help the poor and needy, visit the widows and orphans in their affliction.

The army of Christian workers along this line ought to steadily grow, beating out the pulsation of a life that is truly healthy and strong and one that represents the great heart beats of Jesus Christ himself. And then there too should be that impulse to quicken the throb of our educational movement. Right here upon these grounds is planted an institution that ought to mean much much more to the rising generation than it does to us; it ought to affect and control the motives of the unborn generations for good, and it will do it, if we serve it rather than ourselves. If we shall give it a proper fertilization, and then the culture during its growth in the period of fructification and harvest—we shall be surprised at the noble men and women who will go from here to bless the world.

MR. LINCOLN'S VIEW.

And, too, will not that be life? If the future is made the Golden Age through the men and women we have created by deeds of good doing, will we not be living over again thru them?

One well-known citizen of Norfolk a few days ago tried to cast aspersions upon Lincoln's religion by saying that he was no believer in God, and no professed Christian. Let that be as it will; he certainly had a better conception of life than a great many people we have met whose names are on the church book. Here is what Mr. Lincoln had to say on the subject: "It is not a living, but a life."

This is just what this text means when reduced to its final analysis. What shall life be when the shadows are drawn long upon the wall? What shall life mean when we are passing thru the valley? What shall be the definition of life when we shall stand in the presence of the Maker of worlds and the sentencer of destiny?

I tell you now, brethren, it is yours to give attention to the building of the positive, and not to the negative side of this question.

The holdings of this world on the negative side, and the balance of human conduct and human action not sanctified by religion, will not have a feather's weight; but if it is represented by two things—spiritual regeneration and a life given to service—trying to help our fellow man, it will be the pulsation of the big heart akin to God Himself, that will throb while endless years shall cease to move.

"They that turn many to righteousness shall be as the stars that shine forever."

Can the question: Of what shall a man's life consist when time shall be no more?