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The Secret of St. Paul's Life.

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TEXT. "And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. ii: 20.



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After Him there come the Patriarchs and Prophets and Apostles, and the noble Army of Martyrs and Confessors who in every age have endured as seeing Him who is invisible. In this glorious company there have been men who departed out of this life not having seen death; men who saw God face to face and to whom God spoke as a man to his friend; men who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others had trial and cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy,) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. Among them there have been men and women who have laid down their lives ministering to the sick and dying in times of plague and pestilence. There have been men and women who fearing neither the cold of the frozen north, nor the sweltering heat of the tropics, have not counted their lives dear to them that they might carry the knowledge of the unspeakable riches of Christ to the perishing heathen; there have been men and women in palaces and hovels who in time of darkness and declension have kept the lamp of faith alive and passed it on to succeeding generations; men and women who have led the van in every moral reform looking to the betterment of mankind.

And all these are our ancestors in the faith of Christ. We have no reason to be ashamed of them. But if they are not to be ashamed of us we must walk by the same rule and strive to reproduce in our time that walk and conversation which proclaimed them to be the children of God.

If now we ask concerning the secret of their inspiration and their manner of life we find it well set out in these words of the Apostle, "And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

I. The secret of Paul's life; I live by the faith of the Son of God. The moment we begin to speak of the life of faith many people lose interest in our discourse assuming or fancying that it is quite beyond their comprehension; and that believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most difficult and mysterious things in the world. There never was a greater mistake. The whole world lives by faith. It was by faith that Columbus discovered America. It was faith which sustained and cheered the great discoverers and inventors of every age. Faith lies at the very foundation of our family life. Faith underlies and runs through the whole fabric of social and commercial life. Men are often deceived. Men often deceive themselves. Values often prove delusive and so men suffer loss. All this counts for little or nothing, in spite of all people go on in faith and I do not see that they can do anything else.

Faith is not a blind superstition. It is the result of inquiry. It is an intelligent conclusion based on what is thought to be sufficient information.

When a man wishes to invest a large amount—say nearly all his substance—in bank stock or other public security he does not blindly and inconsiderately take the first thing that comes to hand. He acts rationally and upon due inquiry. But his action, when taken, is, after all, an act of faith, and all the time his money remains invested in the stock selected, his life is a life of faith in its permanent value.

The faith of the Son of God is no exception to the general rule. Here too a man seeks information. When he sees who and what the Lord Jesus is, what security he has to offer for the everlasting

salvation of the soul, the value of the salvation offered and the terms on which it is to be had—if he desires the salvation, and is satisfied with the terms, he commits himself to the Saviour's care, he enters himself in the Saviour's service; he sets himself apart to do what Christ would have him do and to be what Christ would have him be; and this done he lives in expectation of help and blessing and glory just as the holder of Bank Stock lives in expectation of his dividends.

Now what is there mysterious in this? Why should any man think it harder to believe the Son of the Living God than to believe one of his mortal fellow men? It cannot be for want of information. In this city alone (Ottawa) there must be some thousands of men and women of intelligence and character who can testify that the Lord Jesus has actually performed his promise to them, has saved them, has given them new hearts, has helped them in the time of trouble and temptation and has given them a good hope through grace of everlasting life. And beside this testimony of being witnesses you have no end of information in the recorded lives of God's children. And this is testimony which must be received unless a man is able to believe the incredible assertion that, these the purest and best of men and women of every generation since the world began, have entered into a fraudulent conspiracy to deceive the world.

And over and above all this we find ample information regarding the way of life in the inspired Word of God, here we bask in the full light of the Son of Righteousness. With all this information if not actually pressed upon him, yet so easily accessible, the man who refuses or fails to find salvation through the faith of the Son of God is left without excuse.

II. Notice in the second place, the ground or reason of the Apostles faith, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

The Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for us as parents give themselves for their children. Fathers and mothers wear out their lives and spend themselves freely to provide food and shelter and clothing and education for their children and count themselves richly rewarded by the virtue and success of the children. I have known mothers to watch with breathless interest and infinite devotion over the cradle of a helpless infant, morning, noon and night, unable to sleep, scarcely able to touch food, heeding the faintest cry, listening for the slightest movement, ministering to every want, until the babe has come back to life and health. And then when the child was saved, and the weary watching over and the work all done, and the long tension past, the mother broken down by the severity of her vigil has crept into her bed to die, rejoicing that her child was saved even at the cost of her life.

So Christ in His great love gave Himself for us, that he might be the propitiation for our sins.

The forerunner pointed him out as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. He Himself declared that He came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

The Apostles taught by the Holy Spirit, the meaning of His sufferings and death teach us that He was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification; that He was made of God unto wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption; that He gave himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The clear teaching of the Scripture that He died, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God, His death being a true expiation, and therefore the strongest possible ground of a consecrated life. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

If now we ask why he did this, the answer so far as supplied by this passage, is because "He loved me." Redemption originated in the love of God and this makes it peculiarly precious in the judgment of the redeemed.

It is a blessed thing to be saved from sin and misery. It is an unspeakable privilege to be adopted into the family of God and made heirs of life, not because those who love Thee not, must burn eternally.

Thou, O my Jesus, thou didst me
Upon the cross embrace!
For he didst bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace.

And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony,
Yea, death itself, and all for one
That was thine enemy.

Then why O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love thee well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven,
Nor of escaping hell!

Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward,
But as thyself hast loved me
O everlasting Lord.

Even so I love thee and will love
And in thy praise will sing,
Solely because thou art my God
And my eternal King.