

## Key To A Released Personality

by Norman Grubb

Starting from the beginning of Genesis, one is impressed by a simple enough fact: that the original nature of man—the human nature as we call it— came from the hands of God and consists of His own attributes, for man is made in His image. Our physical organism is a marvel and a miracle. The image of God is to be seen peculiarly in the endowments that go to frame self-conscious personality— spirit and mind. The image of God is supremely seen in the spirit, for God Himself is spirit and it is in the throne room of the personality that *"spirit with Spirit can meet,"* and man becomes a son of God. It is also seen in the mind with its imagination and memory, in the emotions which are the driving force of all life, and in the will which makes it master of its fate. Of this masterpiece of creation it is said, *"And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good."*

But a problem arises from the attitude some Christians take to the human personality as a consequence of the Fall. Adam in the Fall was not a total God-rejecter, a devil; rather he was a world-lover and flesh-lover lured by their deceitful appeals, drawn away of his own lust and enticed. No sooner had he given consent than he was ashamed, feared and hid himself, sure evidence that all light had not died in him. And God came down, not to deliver him *"into chains of darkness,"* but to give him a Promised Seed which would one day bear the fruit of his redemption—a vastly different judgment suited to a vastly different condition.

Plainly, there remains in humanity a capacity for God, a something, call it what we may— a seed, a light, a work of the law written in the heart—which is God-conscious, God-hungry, and God-responsive. Do not all fishers of men sense it? The wistful acknowledgment that it must be wonderful to have a sure faith; the multitude of religions; the ready response to vital testimony in the most unlikely quarters; the search for God which neither flame nor sword nor tyrant's decree can quench. Wise soul-winners not only sense it, but give it central place in their method of approach.

Jesus, the greatest of all soul-winners, gave the most tender and true picture of fallen humanity when He described them as *"prodigal sons"*—far away, but still capable of return. His objective with the fallen woman at the well was to quicken and rightly direct her existing sense of thirst. He said He came to call sinners to repentance, thus affirming the existence of a spiritual ear by which sinners can hear. The *"something"* of God in a sinner unites, if he consents, to the calling, saving voice of the Savior come to seek him, and from that union is born the Christ within.

Then what happens? The Scripture speaks of a self, an ego, a nature, which was sin-bound, but now after passing through a death and resurrection in Christ, is sanctified and meet for the Master's use. Romans Seven says, *"I am carnal, sold under sin"*; Romans Six says, *"Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ"*; and *"Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead."* Your members were once *"instruments of unrighteousness unto sin"* but now *"your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost."*

What, then, is the self and the members which were the property of Satan but are now the holy habitation of God? The whole man, the self, the I, is the personality, the God-created mental, emotional, and volitional life referred to previously. The members—or body—are, of course, equally God-created. All of this is now to be *"alive unto God."* In other words, we don't fall into the error of regarding any created thing, not a single attribute of our nature, as bad in its origin (*"I know and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself"*); but merely realize that it can be put to evil use. Satan originated

nothing, but was merely the misdirector, misuser, usurper of a nature whose endowments and capacities were originally created to manifest the glory of God.

Redemption, therefore, regains for God, through the cleansing blood and sanctifying Spirit, the full use of the human personality. "*Alive unto God*" means that, at last, poor enslaved man becomes really alive, abundantly alive: not suppressed, not maimed, not dead nor numbed, but wholly liberated. Not a life of don't's, but of do's to the uttermost: "*In whose service is perfect freedom.*"

The Fall had defiled and cramped and clamped down man's capacities to the narrow circle of his gross and corrupted self-interest. Salvation restores these capacities to the endless developing stimulus of the creative Spirit of God, for co-operation with God's Spirit was the reason that man had been originally endowed with God-like capacities, so that through them would come forth God-like and universal productiveness. It will take all eternity to manifest forth the potentialities of human personality in cooperative submission to the Spirit of God. Truly, the whole creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Away, then, with false bondage and even resentment that cripples some through the mistaken idea that there are capacities of the physical, mental or emotional life of which we should be well rid, or with which it is a puzzle to know why we were ever endowed. Every capacity is God-given, but devil-infected and earth-bound, until rescued, redeemed, and restored to express forth the glories and powers of the world to come.

But how can this liberated, resurrected life in Christ be ours in experience? Many different interpretations of Scripture are given on this point. Some emphasize that as the believer is born of the Spirit, so in logical sequence He will grow in the Spirit, as long as he recognizes the responsibility upon him to co-operate by faith and works. Others, using the type of the crossing of Jordan following upon the passage of the Red Sea or such New Testament examples as Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit upon the believers of Samaria, teach the necessity of a second definite crisis of sanctification, and date the vigorous growth of the believer in the ways of God only as subsequent to this second work of grace. Some go even farther and teach that the filling of the Spirit, to be genuine, must be accompanied by outward signs, as in some instances in the book of Acts. The great saints of past centuries used to speak of the way into the deeps of God as the *via negativa*, the highway of purgation, illumination and union through which all purified souls must pass to reach the full fruition of the Eternal Embrace.

To me it seems clear that all Christian experience is dependent upon the sole condition "*according to your faith be it unto you,*" and that, beyond this, no single method of realizing the Spirit-filled life is revealed. An outline of truth is given, especially in the basic epistle to the Romans, expounding the full implications of the process of Christ in His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and return. Justification is set forth, then sanctification, then the triumphing life, the guided life, the fruitful life, the empowered life, and the sacrificial life.

It does not seem to me that the exact way of realization is delineated in the form of special crises, but rather that the table is spread, and then we are told that faith helps itself. But it does insist that the evidence of true life in God is that we *do* help ourselves and go from grace to grace and from strength to strength. We are justified; well, are we sanctified? Do we have a vital experience of Christ's death and resurrection inwrought in us as outlined in Romans Six, as well as merely appropriated by us in a vicarious and outward sense for sins forgiven? Or, are we only vaguely "reckoning" ourselves as dead and risen with Him, with an underlying unbelief that it really is so?

Being human, we can only receive infinite truth in finite doses. Thus, for instance, most of us see our need of justification, and then only later do we see our need of sanctification.

Though all has been given us eternally and completely in Christ, because we are human and finite, for very many of us (but not necessarily for all), Christian experience is more like the scaling of a flight of steps than progress along a smooth road. As we see a new step of advance, we take it.

After justification, it gradually dawns on us that we have an inward enemy—the flesh—to be dealt with, as well as the outward defilement of our gross sins which were blotted out on our first approach to Calvary. We find ourselves still in bondage to inward corruption, producing outward falls, and with a vastly greater self-consciousness than God-consciousness, which interferes with our outward witness and inward peace. We cry with the Apostle, *"I am carnal, sold under sin."*

Actually this is not so from the Godward aspect— for we are sanctified once and for all in Christ—but faith has so far failed to possess all its possessions. We still live under a delusion that we are carnal when we are not. Unbelief is as potent in its realm as faith is, because it is merely a reversed form of faith, a belief in the power of evil in place of a belief in the power of God. Thus, in actual experience, we feel and see carnality, until unbelief is reversed and transmuted into a bold acceptance and declaration of the established truth in Christ—that we *are* dead and that our life is hid with Him in God. This is for many of us a second experience; and again I stress that it must be the actual experience of all of us who would go on with God, whether or not we call it a second experience.

Faith begins by being a labor (Heb. 4:11) or fight (1 Tim. 6:12), although it is consummated in a rest (Heb. 4:3). That is to say, the first stage of faith is always the battle of taking hold by the will, heart and intelligence of some truth or promise which is not real to us in experience, and declaring it to be ours in spite of appearances. We do not appear to be dead unto sin and alive unto God. But we are told to believe it, and so we dare to do so and declare so.

A thousand times, maybe, faith will be assaulted and fall: unbelief will say "nonsense," and we shall belie our declaration of faith; but the fight or labor of faith means that we deliberately return to the assault. Once again we believe and declare it. This we persist in doing. As we thus follow in the steps of those who "by faith and patience" inherit the promises, a new divine thing will happen within us.

The Spirit will co-operate with our faith (as He is invisibly doing all the time), and to faith will be added assurance: labor and fight will be replaced by rest. The consummation of faith has been reached. What was once an effort to attain or maintain, now becomes as natural as breathing. Such is the *law* of faith, whether exercised in sanctification, or in any of the later and higher reaches of Christian experience.

To sum up, our God-given human nature is a dynamic potential, which can be directed, according to the aims of its chosen overlord, to good or evil. In the Fall it has been "sold under sin," but now in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, "we" (our original selves) are bought back from the usurper, and bidden to reckon ourselves "*alive unto God*" and to "*yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead.*"

The root of this release is found in the substitutionary death of Christ and our realization of our identification with Him on the Cross. This does not mean that some part of us is to die, but that we are to see ourselves in Christ as those who have passed through an experience of death so far as any further acknowledgment of the lordship of Satan and union with sin are concerned. Nothing in us ourselves has died. There is no such thing as the death of self or death to self.

Rather God now reunites us to Himself for the purpose of expressing His own glory through our "selves." We have passed on beyond the Cross, out of the tomb into the resurrection.

The emotions now express love for God and man, hatred of evil, jealousy for God's glory, and pride (glory) in the Cross. The imagination and intuition are vibrant with a constant sight and sense of Him Whom having not seen we love, and with a vision of His love for the world. The will makes choices and declarations of faith. The body uses its capacities both in sounding forth His praise and sharing in the preaching of the Gospel to every creature. It is the same self, the same "I," but it is now the willing servant and son of the Spirit.

Thus, in a word, we have seen the way of the Spirit to be transmutation: the losing of nothing with which God has endowed us, but the transmuting of the whole self from a fleshly to spiritual kingdom. This fact has meant to us a new and exhilarating freedom, a knowledge that in Christ we have come to full manhood and womanhood, with every endowment of our humanity "*holy unto the Lord.*"