

Redemption and Life

- 1 Why should I worry, doubt and fear?
Has God not caused His Son to bear
My sins upon the tree?
The debt that Christ for me has paid,
Would God another mind have made
To claim again from me?
- 2 Redemption full the Lord has made,
And all my debts has fully paid,
From law to set me free.
I fear, not for the wrath of God,
For I've been sprinkled with His blood,
It wholly covers me.
- 3 For me forgiveness He has gained,
And full acquittal was obtained,
All debts of sin are paid;
God would not have His claim on two,
First on His Son, my Surety true,
And then upon me laid.
- 4 So now I have full peace and rest,
My Savior Christ hath done the best
And set me wholly free;
By His all-efficacious blood
I ne'er could be condemned by God,
For He has died for me! (*Hymns*, #1003)

When he wrote his Epistle to the church in Rome, the apostle Paul was burdened to unveil the gospel of God, which he structured into three major sections, which we may title respectively: redemption, life, and building. In using the word *redemption*, we include several crucial aspects of what God has accomplished through the death of Christ on the cross—specifically, salvation, justification, forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation. These all are the aspects of Christ's death applied to us to save us objectively. *Life* is the resurrected Christ within us to save us subjectively. His life must enter into us and operate in us through faith. *Building* is the coordination and building together of God's chosen ones to be the Body of Christ as the complete expression of the Triune God. It is the goal of God's full salvation and the issue of life's operation within us.

These three key aspects of the gospel are revealed in two hymns. The first hymn, written by Watchman Nee, dwells on the effectiveness of Christ's *redemption* for our

eternal salvation from God's eternal judgment and condemnation. The second encompasses *life* for our daily salvation, which issues in *building* as the goal of God's eternal purpose.

Concerning Redemption

In the redemption that Christ obtained through His death on the cross we have a firm and steadfast foundation on which we can securely rest. Nothing should shake our confidence in the effectiveness of the wonderful fact that Christ died for us. Under such a controlling vision, the first hymn begins with the thoughtful consideration, "Why should I worry, doubt and fear? / Has God not caused His Son to bear / My sins upon the tree?"

Christ's death on the cross has completely fulfilled and absolutely satisfied forever the righteous requirements of God (Rom. 3:24-26). The efficacy of His redemptive death is proven by His resurrection from the dead; so Paul affirms: that the Lord Jesus "was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification. Therefore having been justified out of faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and boast because of the hope of the glory of God" (4:25-5:2). We *have been* justified by God through Christ's once-for-all sacrifice; through faith in that all-inclusive death, redemption is actuated and established in our experience. Now through Him, the crucified and resurrected Christ, we have ceaseless and unending access to God. *Why* should I worry?

Christ's redemption guarantees that we are accepted before God, who now is working all things for our good according to His purpose. In His plan we are justified—approved by God according to His standard of righteousness. We no longer are living in the dread of judgment; judgment is over. God has laid our sins upon His Son, and through faith in that glorious fact, we who believe are made unconditionally right with God. *Why* should I fear? "Has God not caused His Son to bear / My sins upon the tree?" The Scriptures frequently refer to the death of Christ on the cross as His hanging on a tree for our sins; He is the absolute propitiation for every believing sinner, freeing us from the penalty of our transgression

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against the righteousness of God (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal. 3:13). Peter declares, “Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed” (1 Pet. 2:24).

Subsequently the hymn proclaims, “The debt that Christ for me has paid, / Would God another mind have made / To claim again from me?” Even though “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” the believers are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23-24). Hallelujah! We should never worry, doubt, or fear. We, the sinners who were His enemies, have been reconciled to God—made one with Him whom we once despised and rejected. Now we are enjoying eternal harmony with Him through His Son’s redeeming grace.

The riches of Christ’s full redemption include the payment of all our debts and the setting free from the law: “Redemption full the Lord has made, / And all my debts has fully paid, / From law to set me free.” Because of our weakness in the flesh, we could never be justified by the law given by Moses, but “in this One everyone who believes is justified” (Acts 13:38-39). The astounding news announced to us in the gospel is that what the law could not do, *God in His Son has done* (Rom. 8:3), thus setting us free from the law. It is crucial for us to realize the full power of the gospel of God. In it the righteousness of God is revealed (1:16-17), but this righteousness is not the result of our working and keeping of the law. It is the righteousness out of God and based on faith; every believer should aspire to experience Christ as everything to him and make it his goal and aim to “be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith” (Phil. 3:9). All debts are paid and all righteousness is accounted to those who are in Christ Jesus our Lord. The excelling power of the gospel lies in the effectiveness of Christ’s death on the cross. God has laid all the sins of the entire world for all of time on Christ. He was made sin on our behalf (1 John 2:2; 2 Cor. 5:21). Now we who trust in Him are freed from the wrath of God. By the sprinkling

of the blood of the Lamb, we are freed from fear of the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9; 3:25). “I fear not for the wrath of God, / For I’ve been sprinkled with His blood, / It wholly covers me.”

Stanza 3 contemplates further what we received through His redemption. He has gained for us forgiveness, obtaining full acquittal—the exoneration from all charges, because all the debts of sin are paid. For this reason there should be an unshakable assurance issuing from the believing heart: “God would not have His claim on two, / First on His Son, my Surety true, / And then upon me laid.” We can be free from all fear and anxiety concerning our eternal security with God; He is righteous, and He has accepted the payment in full! Now we have received full pardon. God will never lay that charge on us again. Whenever we are faced with the inward turmoil produced by the accusations of the accuser, suggesting that somehow the saving power of Christ’s death is not sufficient in our particular case, we should focus on the One who previously had a righteous claim on us, God, but then ask, “If God is for us, who can be against us? Indeed, He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s chosen ones? It is God who justifies” (8:31-33). *It is God who justifies*. The assurance of our eternal welcome and acceptance in the presence of God should ever reverberate in the inner recesses of our hearts—God is for us! Who can be against us?

The hymn finishes with the triumphant assurance of mature faith. “So now I have full peace and rest, / My Savior Christ hath done the best / And set me wholly free.” The “all-efficacious blood” of our Savior covers us. We could never be condemned by God! Similarly, Paul closes the first section of his Epistle full of confidence and security in his redemption: “Therefore having been justified out of faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ....God commends His own love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified in His blood, we will be saved through Him from the wrath” (5:1, 8-9).

Concerning Life

Romans 5:10 continues, “For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.” Paul points toward the second section of his gospel in this verse. *Saved in His life* is a phrase laden with fertile significance. The hymn below, written by Witness Lee, leads us step by step to pursue Christ as the rich supply of our life. It begins with the exultant proclamation, “Thou art all my life, Lord.” The life we receive through God’s salvation is just Christ Himself as the

essential element in us that motivates, energizes, and empowers all our living.

- 1 Thou art all my life, Lord,
In me Thou dost live;
With Thee all God's fulness
Thou to me dost give.
By Thy holy nature
I am sanctified,
By Thy resurrection,
Vict'ry is supplied.
- 2 Now Thy flowing life, Lord,
Doth enlighten me,
Bringing in the spirit
Fellowship with Thee;
All my need supplying,
Making Thy demand,
Leading me to cleansing
And in Thee to stand.
- 3 Thy anointing Spirit
Me shall permeate,
All my soul and spirit
Thou wouldst saturate;
Every part transforming
Till conformed to Thee,
Till Thy life shall bring me
To maturity.
- 4 Lord, Thy life abundant,
Flowing, rich and free,
Constantly refreshes
And empowers me.
Death by life is swallowed,
Weakness is made strong,
All my bonds are broken,
Gloom is turned to song.
- 5 I would give myself, Lord,
Fully unto Thee,
That Thy heart's desire
Be fulfilled in me.
I no more would struggle
To myself reform,
Thus in me to hinder
What Thou wouldst perform,
- 6 I would cease completely
From my efforts vain,
Let Thy life transform me,
Full release to gain;
Build me up with others
Till in us Thou see
Thy complete expression
Glorifying Thee. (*Hymns*, #841)

Although redemption is a truly wonderful portion of the full salvation that Christ consummated through His death and resurrection, the gospel does not stop with it. Praise the Lord! In the first section of the gospel presented by Paul, we have seen the complete resolution to the seemingly irresolvable dilemma of sinners under the eternal condemnation of the righteousness of God—redemption! But after we have been made right with God judicially, we need to go on to be saved in His life. If salvation were to stop at redemption, it would be a cruel fate. Although we were eternally reckoned as righteous—even as the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21)—we would eternally be incapable of living in a manner consistent with our status and acceptance before God. Redemption is a procedure that prepares us to receive the life of God. Before redemption, we were like a filthy glass full of corruption and contamination. Now we have been made clean and pure through Christ's all-inclusive death. The glass is ready to be filled with the rich supply of life; without the infusion of life it is still just an empty vessel.

The first stanza of this hymn introduces an overview of the life we have been given through faith in our Lord Jesus. This life, which is Christ Himself moving in us, imparts God into us with all of His fullness. All the fullness of God dwells in Christ bodily, and we are made full in Him (Col. 2:9-10). When we received Him, we received all that He is because Christ is God's fullness. Hence, as believers, God as life is now our personal portion through Christ! We have God, not simply as our Father in the heavens—we have God as an intrinsic component in our being, depositing into us everything that God is, has, and has accomplished through Christ. He as life enlivens, energizes, and empowers us to daily live out the life of Christ.

In addition, this life communicates the nature of God to sanctify us. To sanctify implies to make holy—to set apart from all other things to be God's alone. Peter tells us that God has given us "precious and exceedingly great promises" through which we become partakers of the divine nature; the sanctifying operation of this divine nature in us enables us to escape the corruption which is in the world by lust (2 Pet. 1:4). Thus, we are made holy as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

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The resurrection of Christ is the touchstone of the dispensing of the life of God into us. Through Christ's resurrection, we possess God's life and nature, and this life supplies us with His victory in every situation. The phrase *By Thy resurrection, vict'ry is supplied* implies that Christ is made available to us in His resurrected person. When we read in 1 Corinthians 15:45 that the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit in resurrection, we can realize that what He is and has obtained in resurrection is now transmitted to us as the Spirit. In His resurrection Christ imparts into us the richer, higher, and transcendent aspect of God's salvation—"we will be saved in His life!" Paul introduced this life-changing aspect of the gospel of God when he wrote, "But the righteous shall have life and live by faith" (Rom. 1:17), indicating that through the power of God, which imparts righteousness to the believers, the element of life is also infused into us that we may live another life in faith. Moreover, Colossians 3:4 reveals that this life is Christ Himself. In Romans 5:12 through 8:39, we are enlightened further to see that this life operates in us to save us from a number of the entanglements of sin, flesh, and self—it saves us from the law of sin and death in our flesh, from worldliness in our environment, from the old man in our natural being, from our self, and even from our individualistic living in our fallen nature. The saving life of Christ sanctifies us, transforms us, and conforms us to the image of Christ the firstborn Son of God; finally this life builds us into the unique oneness of the Body of Christ. Wonderful! The resurrected Christ, as the indwelling Spirit now abides in us to be all our life, living in us!

Having introduced the overview of life, the hymn continues in the second stanza to detail the process by which this life transmits to us and functions in us. The life flows in us to enlighten us and bring us into fellowship with God: "Now Thy flowing life, Lord, / Doth enlighten me, / Bringing in the spirit / Fellowship with Thee." The expression here mirrors the words written by the apostle John in his first Epistle:

(And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us); that which we have

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seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (vv. 2-3)

The life—the eternal life of God that was manifested and that the apostles had seen and heard—was a person, Jesus Christ the Son of God. By declaring what they had touched and known in this wonderful person, John invites his readers into fellowship with him, and his fellowship is with the Father and the Son. Fellowship indicates a joint participation; it speaks of the flow of the eternal life within all the believers. In the experience of the believers this fellowship is the fulfillment of the rivers of living water of which Jesus prophesied, saying, "He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). John tells us that this was speaking of the Spirit (v. 39).

John further declares in his Epistle that our participation in this flowing river depends on our walking in the light, and that as we walk in the light, we are being cleansed from every sin by the blood of Jesus, the Son of God (1 John 1:5-7). The life flowing in our being brings us into the divine light. This light which emanates from the Spirit of God imparting Himself into our human spirit brings us into fellowship with the Father and the Son. Here in this fellowship the life also shines into us making its demand on us, i.e., convicting us of sin. But, praise the Lord that along with the demand, this stream of life leads us to the cleansing fountain of the blood of Jesus, and by means of that precious blood we are able to stand in our dear Savior. Thus, the stanza concludes: "All my need supplying, / Making Thy demand, / Leading me to cleansing / And in Thee to stand." This depicts the process of the application of this life into our daily living.

The third stanza shows us the means by which this life flows in us and out from us. "Thy anointing Spirit / Me shall permeate, / All my soul and spirit / Thou wouldst saturate." The Spirit of God is the anointing Spirit who flows over us and within us. As He anoints us, He permeates our entire being, spreading from our spirit to our soul until He thoroughly saturates every part. By means of this anointing, spreading, saturating Spirit, every part is being transformed indicating the metabolic change of our inward parts until we become a mirror image of the One we are beholding (2 Cor. 3:18). The end result of this flowing, transforming life issues in conformation to the very image of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29), bringing us into full maturity as the many brothers of the Firstborn. By this metabolic process, our God works Himself as life fully into us. Then what is our sensation as this procedure occurs?

Stanza 4 reveals that this wonderful, all-sufficient, flowing, super-abounding life constantly refreshes and empowers us. God is working, and we are enjoying. Our

daily living becomes an interchange between us and God. Our death is being swallowed up in His life; our weakness is replaced by His strength. All the things which once bound us—sin, worldliness, flesh, self—all are broken, and we, like Samson who effortlessly ripped apart the chains that sought to hold him prisoner, are also enabled to stand up, shake off the bonds, and go forth without hindrance. All our gloom is turned to song. These are the experiences of those who habitually open to allow this flowing life to move into, through, and out of them. “Death by life is swallowed, / Weakness is made strong, / All my bonds are broken, / Gloom is turned to song.”

Within every seeking child of God there is a genuine cry for deliverance from the effects of sin and weakness in our flesh and the distractions of the world around us. Consequently, we may appeal to the Lord to reveal to us how to cooperate with this flowing of God’s life within us. Stanza 5 responds by uttering a vow of consecration: “I would give myself, Lord, / Fully unto Thee, / That Thy heart’s desire / Be fulfilled in me.” Our response must be a thorough and absolute consecration. Paul speaks of this consecration: “Present yourselves to God as alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:13). Again in 12:1 he urges the believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and well pleasing to God. We must give ourselves without reservation to the Lord that He may freely move in, through, and out of us.

The action of presenting our bodies to the Lord has a counterpart in our conduct: “I no more would struggle / To myself reform, / Thus in me to hinder / What Thou wouldst perform.” We must learn the lesson that our own effort to improve our behavior and live a holy life actually hinders the operation of God’s life within us. This principle is clearly articulated by Paul in contrasting the law of sin and death in chapter seven with the law of the Spirit of life in chapter eight. Whenever we try to do better, to make ourselves good Christians in conduct, the law of sin and death in our members is activated; we immediately become slaves to sin. But in Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life sets us free from the law of sin and death. The key to cooperate with the Spirit in us is to “walk...according to the spirit” (8:4). So the sixth and final stanza begins with the continuation of our cooperation with the life in us. “I would cease completely / From my efforts vain, / Let Thy life transform me, / Full release to gain.” As we sing this wonderful song, there should be a blessed “giving up” within our hearts. May we surrender to—let, allow, and permit that wonderful all-powerful life within us, the moving life-giving Spirit, do His work of transforming us freely!

The final words of the hymn address the goal and the issue. God’s redemptive and saving life operating upon

and within the believers has as its ultimate issue—the building up of the believers into the complete expression of God. Paul also concentrates on building in chapters twelve through sixteen of Romans; his gospel is constructed on these three pillars: redemption, life, and building. Redemption is for buying back, cleansing, and preparing the believers to be vessels qualified and ready to receive the life of God; through the flowing of this life, the vessels are sanctified, transformed, and conformed to the image of the Firstborn. The issue of redemption and life is the building up of all the members to be the Body of Christ for God’s expression. The building up of the Body of Christ through the organic function of each member according to his assigned portion is the focus of chapter twelve. Chapter fourteen speaks of receiving one another and the pursuit of “the things of peace and the things for building up one another” (v. 19). Chapter fifteen urges the believers to please one another “with a view to what is good for building up” (v. 2).

The consummate goal of God’s eternal salvation is not millions of redeemed sinners living victorious, overcoming lives. The heart of God beats with the desire to have a composite, corporate expression of what He is. We see this as the indispensable culmination of the divine record in the description of the New Jerusalem in the final chapters of the book of Revelation: “And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal” (21:10-11). To be a holy city is the final destiny of all the redeemed, transformed, conformed, and glorified believers joined to and mingled with the Triune God to be His eternal counterpart and dwelling place. The building up of the believers is not an afterthought in the heart of God—it is His eternal purpose. Neither should it be the postscript to our Christian experience. The building up with all the believers must be our all-consuming longing and our imperative entreaty: “Build me up with others / Till in us Thou see / Thy complete expression / Glorifying Thee.”

by Gary Kaiser

The issue of redemption and life is the building up of all the members to be the Body of Christ for God’s expression. The building up of the Body of Christ is through the organic function of each member according to his assigned portion.