

SAVED WHEN DEAD

By J. W. Wyatt

"Even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ, {by grace ye are saved.}" Eph. 2:5.

We understand the apostle in this epistle to a Gentile church, and with them, to all the faithful in Christ Jesus, to be labouring to show that all spiritual blessings result to us from the fixed purpose and determinate decrees of God, who worketh all things after the council of his own will; and flowing to the heirs of promise in precise accordance with the doctrine of election – According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. And having in the first chapter brought to view the firm, immutable and everlasting basis of our hope for life and salvation, dwells, in the immediate connection of our text, on the quickening power of God, in reference to the execution of His eternal and unfrustrable design in the salvation of his people. In the passage presented for consideration, the saints are spoken of as being quickened together with Christ, and saved by grace. We presume the following consideration are fairly involved in the subject before us.

First, The life which the saints had in Christ before they fell in Adam. That the saints had any personal individual existence other than that which was given them in Christ, we shall not contend; but that they existed as the spiritual body of which Christ is the Head, is as clearly proven in the scriptures, as is the existence of Christ as Head of His body; and that the body of Christ was created in Christ, as that Eve was created in Adam; and that they were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and in Him were predestinated to all that they were by Jehovah destined to be, either in time or in eternity, is fully implied in the first chapter of this epistle. The omniscient eye

could, and did see the substance of Christ, lying in embryo; and in His book all his members were written when as yet there was none of them. Psalms 139:16.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. John 1:4. Do we inquire, What life was in Him, who was with God and was God? The apostle answers: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." "When he who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Col.3:3-4. In perfect harmony with this sentiment, is the expression of the Psalmist, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Psa.91:1. The place where God has hidden the life of his people must be a secret place, and under the shadow or protection of the Almighty, and that such is the place of the saint's security. Deut.33:27. "The eternal God is thy refuge," and that such has ever been the spiritual habitation of the saints. Psalms 90:1-2. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations; before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world; even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." As we apprehend no danger of these promises being disputed by any who are sound in the faith, we will therefore pass on.

The cause of death, and alienation, from God: In the preceding part of the chapter from which we have our text, the apostle connects our death with our existence in an earthly Adam, or under the law, as transgressors thereof; dead, he says, in trespasses and sins. He has elsewhere informed us that sin is a transgression of the law; but where there is no law, there is no transgression. Hence this death has reference to our law state; and consequently to our relation, to an earthly Adam. Now if we were to speak of the first Great Cause of all causes, we would say with the Psalmist, {90:3} "Thou turnest men to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men." Or in the language of the apostle, {Rom.8:20} "For the creature was made

subject to vanity; not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope."

But when speaking as to the Procuring cause, on the part of man, we conceive that our alienation from God, and total depravity, and death in sins, is attributable to the introduction of sin into the world.

In Romans 5:17, the apostle tells us, that by one man's offence, death reigned by one. And again in Ephesians, {4:18} this apostle attributes our alienation from the life of God, to that ignorance which is, in us, in consequence of our depravity by sin. Hence he very justly denominates it a death in trespasses and sins. The nature of our alienation is properly compared to a state of captivity. "All we like sheep have gone astray." Isa.53:6, I Pet.2:25. The law under which we were created in Adam required of us perfect and everlasting obedience; and said in a voice of thunder, The soul that sinneth, it shall die. We had all sinned and come short of his glory; hence we fell under the condemning sentence of the law, became lawful captives, were by the law cast into the prison of death, and there held in chains of darkness, without hope, and without God in the world; and, as the apostle here tells us, "That at this time we were without Christ – {as life, for Christ is our life} being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, {literally Gentiles, and condemned sinners in the spiritual view of the subject,} and strangers to the covenants of Promise." The covenants of Promise made with Abraham, were figurative of the provisions of Grace locked up in the cabinet of the divine mind; for the heirs of salvation; and in our degradation we were utter strangers to that provision. And equally so to any other way of life and salvation. Notwithstanding our captivity, darkness, bondage, guilt and death; we are not to suppose that what was treasured up in Christ for us, had undergone any change. God is immutable; and Jude assures us that the saints which were sanctified by God the Father, were preserved in Christ Jesus. Jude 1. And Paul has named them as the "reserved

ones." Rom.11:4. And our text, as we profess to show, forbids the notion that God's love towards us could be abated by any thing which we could do. Many waters cannot quench love. Neither can the floods drown it. Songs 8:7. Nor can all the substance of poor, lost, sinful mortals buy it. It is sovereign, discriminating, eternal, immutable, and invincible! Could we admit that in our fall in Adam, we fell out of Christ, or that the vital relationship of his children to Him was dissolved, in relation to that life which was given in Him, and secured for us in Him before all worlds, we should despair of salvation by him; for the lawful captive must be lawfully delivered; and by virtue of the eternal indissoluble union; the right of redemption was vested in Christ; and on this principle He came into the world, and was made under the law, not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it, to redeem them that were under the law. In this relationship he could, and did as truly represent us, in the obedience which he rendered to the divine law, as Adam had represented us in his first transgression of divine authority; hence, says the apostle, "Therefore, as, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life; for, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Rom.5:18-19.

In the foregoing, we have expressed our views of the life we had in Christ from everlasting, of our fallen state, and alienation in our earthly Adam, our captivity, bondage, etc., and also the way of life through the obedience and death of Christ, but our text says, We are "quickened together with Christ." Apart from Him we must have been, had the pre-existing bond been severed, and apart from Him there was no way possible for us to be quickened. Our natural head Adam, was made a living soul, but our spiritual representative was made a quickening spirit. He quickeneth whomsoever he will. Together with him. How sweet; How heavenly the language! Together with him, we

had life before the world began. Together with him we are in due time quickened and raised from the dead. Together with Christ are we sons of God, and heirs of immortal glory and so completely together and united that when he died for us all, then were we all dead; dead to the law by the body of Christ. All our accumulated guilt was laid on him; bearing for us all the dreadful curse of the law, billows of divine wrath overwhelming his soul and baptized deep in death, but soon the bands of death gave way, soon the auspicious morning dawned which gave ample demonstration of his complete victory over sin, death and hell. While the radiant flame of his refulgent glory brought life and immortality to light, for all the members of his mystical body. In the resurrection of Christ the prophecy of Isaiah {26:19} was fulfilled, "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy den is as the den of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Having thus suffered in him the vengeance of the law, being crucified together with him, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance {not a purchased possession} incorruptible, and undefiled, {not withstanding our fall in Adam} and that fadeth not away; reserved {not merely procured} in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." See I Pet.1:3-5. Hence we see in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the all sufficiency of the atonement, complete satisfaction rendered to law and divine justice, the prison doors are opened, the jubilee trumpet is blown, liberty is proclaimed to captives, the prisoners are brought up out of their prison houses; and as he bursts forth from the confines of the tomb, his ransomed church is seen emerging from the dead. While the old heavens are dissolving with fervent heat, the shout is heard, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Psa.24:7-9. When God went up with a

shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Psa.47:5. How full of consolation is the contemplation of the union of Christ and His Church.

"One in the tomb, one when He arose,
One when He triumphed over His foes,
One when in heaven he took His seat,
While seraphs sung all hell's defeat."

That this astonishing work was done for us when we were dead in sins, is worthy of our most special attention. Before we were dead, we needed no such work as quickening, or the resurrection of our blessed Lord for us, as "the whole need not a physician." "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Rom.5:8-9. And again, this great work being done for us when we were dead in sins, shows that it could not rest on any merits, work or will of ours; therefore the apostle adds the words, by grace ye are saved, and lest any man should boast; but that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ, afterwards declares that it is not of works. In Christ Jesus unto good works which God had before ordained that we should walk in them. Be it ours therefore to reflect with wonder, joy and admiration and gratitude to God on the wonderful salvation, of a way of life and salvation so completely adapted to our ruined condition and so calculated to abase the proud and boastful man in the very dust before God, unto his dear name be glory, majesty and power, now and forever. Amen.