

Dead, Yet Living

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing spiritual poverty, seeking God's supply, and trusting in Christ's righteousness and responsibility.

Scripture: Psalm 25:14, John 6:45, John 14:6, John 17:2, Romans 7:4, Ephesians 3:12, Colossians 3:3, 1 Peter 1:5

Topics: "Spiritual Life", "New Creation"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches about the profound truth that believers are dead to self and alive in Christ, hidden and secure in God. He emphasizes the importance of being taught by God and led by the Holy Spirit to fully understand and experience the depths of God's love and salvation. Bradbury highlights the necessity of being dead to the world and alive to God through Jesus Christ, finding true life and purpose in Him alone.

Transcript

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:3)

"True religion's more than notion,

Something must be known and felt."

Known by divine communication. Felt by divine indwelling. Frequently, that which is so felt is very perplexing, filling the mind with anxiety and care, and until the Masters of assemblies, Who are the Teachers of the living members of the church of the Firstborn, are pleased to communicate Their mind, will, purpose and pleasure in every spiritual lesson, in every article of a God-given creed, in every enjoyment of a God-inspired confidence, the heart sighs:

God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants His footsteps in the sea,

And rides upon the storm.

Yet, blessed by His Holy Name, He wills and works according to His good pleasure, and His willing and working always beget a mutual experience and understanding in those whom He indwells, and whom He

brings to a right apprehension of His mind concerning them as contained in Holy Scripture. The Three Divine Teachers are Those with Whom we have to do, and Whose communications we love. You discover something of this in the Master's own words, recorded in John 6:45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." They learn of the Father concerning His holiness, justice and truth, while they tremble to approach Him. They learn of the Son "in Whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him," (Eph. 3:12) the love and goodwill of the Father toward them. This gracious teaching is clearly seen in the 14th, 15th, 16th chapters of John, and is sweetly enjoyed by the leading and guiding of the Covenant Remembrancer.

Now God, in the riches of His grace and the fullness of His mercy, is pleased to bring His taught ones to the knowledge and enjoyment of the fact, that all they can possess graciously and experience profitably before Him, for His glory, and for their spiritual and eternal good, is all in Himself. All in Himself, all to be experienced in oneness with the Father, in the Son of His love, by the witness and seal of the Holy Ghost. This is the teaching and experience of the Apostle Paul all through his writings. Begin with the Romans, though the epistles to the Thessalonians stand first in chronological order. They were his earliest epistles. Read through them all and you will find the Apostle ever the same, always dealing out the same glorious truths, and not seeking to suit his messages to every shade of opinion, or school of thought. Being a servant of God he sought to please God whether men were pleased or not. But here I would like so to direct your attention to the truth of God that our minds may be led away from all consideration of self, to find ourselves nothing, nothing at all but sin; and yet, O wonder of wonders! to discover that in Christ we are something to Him, that in Christ we are something to the Father, that in Christ we are something to His Indwelling Spirit; and that something, vastly more than words can express, more than tongue can tell, more than heart can conceive, more than language can explain. The people of God are everything to Him, for He has positively declared that He will sacrifice everything apart from Himself for the sake of them. Babylon must sink to the depths of perdition like a millstone in the main, the world and all things therein must depart, while the inhabitants thereof stagger at the thought of the great conflagration which shall devour the whole. For "the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works therein, shall be burned up," (2 Peter 3:10) while the children of God shall remain unscathed. What a privilege it is to sing honestly and heartily before God,

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness

My beauty are, my glorious dress;

Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,

With joy shall I lift up my head.

Is that your blessed lot this morning? I hope so from the ground of my heart. I will tell you why I do so. Because we are tempted to seek for that out of Jesus Christ which can only be found in Him. Thousands are seeking for a standing before God, for a sense of acceptance with Him, the enjoyment of forgiveness, and the experience of justification, not on the ground of what Jesus Christ has done and suffered, not through His blood and obedience; but on the ground of their comfortable frames and feelings, which are evanescent, intermittent and fleeting. I may be comfortable with a happy sense of my acceptance with God, but my comfort may depart with the very enjoyment of it. We must be brought to the spot of covenant certainty indicated in the language of the text, and beautifully expressed in the scriptural words of the

hymn we love,
"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean of Jesus' Name:
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

There is no mistake at all about that. O no! Uncertain is the ground apart from Jesus Christ. It may be moral, it may be religious; it may be excellent according to the world's notion, and experimental according to the church's estimation, but all must perish before the perfections of the God-Man-Mediator, Jesus Christ, the preciousness of His blood, the perfection of His righteousness, the prevalency of His intercession, and the matchless excellency of His Adorable Person.

Now to the text. In its connection it is worthy of our consideration. There is vastly more in it than we have seen, or shall discover during our sojourn in these lower scenes of night. Here may we enjoy the source and streams of spiritual knowledge, which alone can cheer and enliven the dry and dreary places through which we are called to pass, and here may we enjoy the blessedness of that sweet word of promise, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." (Isa. 41:17) "The poor and needy" are those who experience spiritual poverty, who, having nothing, seek for spiritual supply in God's house, in God's blessed Book, in God's exceeding great and precious promises. There we have sought and found not, and thought we would betake ourselves to prayer; but pray we could not. In this we have proved our weakness and folly, for we thought we could pray when we could not produce a sigh. All our little strength was gone and our vain notions of ability have vanished like empty vapour. In these straights we have cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And the response from the depths of our hearts by the Holy Ghost has been, "Our sufficiency is of God." Our sufficiency as children is in the covenant provision of our God and Father. Our sufficiency as the redeemed brethren of Jesus Christ is wholly in Him. Our sufficiency as temples of the Abiding Comforter is only enjoyed by His gracious revealings, Who communicates according to the Father's mind and will, and the intercession of a Precious Christ up yonder.

Let us look at the preceding context "If ye then be risen with Christ." Are you risen with Christ? Have you been slaughtered and slain by the piercing exercisings of the law of God in you? If not, you are destitute of the power of Christ's resurrection. I love the truth of our Lord's resurrection as set before us all through the New Testament Scriptures, not as a mere dogma, not as an article of a creed, not as a fact in history. We object not to these, but we need something more. We delight not to these, but we need something more. We delight in it as a spiritual and experimental reality by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. Have you been brought into the experience of that life which is described in a heavenly and divine manner all through the Gospel by John? If so, you are in possession of eternal life, a life that can never be taken from you. In fact that life is Christ. You cannot separate Christ from that life nor that life from Christ. If you have the life you have Christ. If you have Christ you have the life. This life is yours through the death of your Covenant Head, Surety, Husband and Friend, that Blessed One Who holds Himself responsible for the

salvation, preservation and glorification of His covenant people. What a blessed truth that is when it dawns upon the mind, and when revealed in its clearness by the power of the Holy Ghost. Responsibility! That is a word of solemn, sombre import from many a pulpit to frighten religious changelings into a profession of that which they do not possess. But we delight in the glorious truth of shifted responsibility, and the blessed fact that we can never be shifted for a moment from the Responsible One.

Consider the accomplishment of all that was laid upon Him. He was responsible to the Father for the production of a righteousness without which I could never appear before God, responsible for the endurance of that without which I must be left at an everlasting distance from God. He could say honestly, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God." (Ps. 40:8) He could say to His mother, who evidently knew nothing about the matter, though the Papists seem marvellously fond of her ignorance "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49) Listen to Him again, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:34) Listen again, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." (John 6:38) Mark well the way in which He ever proceeded in His Father's business "I do always those things that please Him." (John 8:29) It is pleasing to dwell upon the fact that every thought of Christ, every look of Christ, every motion of Christ, every word of Christ, every act of Christ, all combined in forming that perfect righteousness in which all who died and rose with Him are everlastingly justified. Yes, blessed be His Holy Name, the oneness existing between the Covenant Head and those given to Him before all worlds, ceased not when He suffered upon Calvary's accursed tree. When He obeyed, they obeyed in Him, when He suffered, they suffered in Him, when He died, they died in Him, when He rose again, they rose together with Him, and in the fullness of time every one of them shall know it by the indwelling, witness and sealing of His blessed Spirit. The hope, life and joy of the church is not a dead Christ on the cross, or in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea; but a living Christ, the Christ of God living at the right hand of God the Father, and living there for us, according to that blessed word, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25) He what? "EVER LIVETH to make intercession for them." Because of this He lives in us and we live in Him.

Listen! "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (John 3:36) Listen again! "If thou knewest the Gift of God, and Who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Again, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:10,14) Look still further "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 4:24) Read through the sixth chapter, where you find Jesus in association with His loved ones, and His loved ones in fellowship with Him, a living Christ. Here by faith you eat His flesh and drink His blood in the purity, preciousness and spirituality of His truth, and enjoy Himself, ETERNAL LIFE. Come to John 14:6, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." I, your Brother, Surety, Saviour, God. I am the Life, your life. And "because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19) How blessed! See how this is set before us in John 17:2,3: "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give ETERNAL LIFE to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is LIFE ETERNAL, that they might know Thee the Only True God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

In all this I am led to see that the hell of desertion I so richly deserved, Christ endured for me. The darkness and gloom which otherwise would have been my lot, He patiently bore for me. He laid down His precious life to satisfy His Father's justice, vindicate His holiness, and magnify His truth. All this He

endured for the glory of God the Father, and that His people should be brought into the enjoyment of His presence, which is salvation. Only yesterday, Ps. 42:5, was a precious word to me "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God" "In God:" not in thyself, thy circumstances, thy feelings, thy frames, or anything of thine own. God-given frames and feelings are very precious in the enjoyment of them. But may they ever be kept in their right place. You never see gardeners in their right senses planting trees with the roots upwards. So, we look for spiritual fruit and ripe experience proceeding from the Person of the Son of God's love. "Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance;" or as we read in the margin, "His presence is salvation."

What a blessed thing it is to enjoy the company of our risen and ascended Lord. RISEN! What a glorious word! What a soul-inspiring truth! Yes, when Jesus rose from the regions of condemnation and death, we rose in Him. When Jesus ascended into heaven and took His place in the presence of the Father, we ascended in Him. In the fullness of time the Father's mind and will must be accomplished in the experience of every elect vessel of mercy, all in the Person of Jesus by the power of the Holy Ghost. By this power we are associated with Jesus in resurrection, and we delight in the announcement He makes of Himself in John 11:25,26: "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Thus blessed in association with our Risen and Exalted Redeemer we seek those things which are above, simply because our Treasure is there; "for where our Treasure is, there will our heart be also." (Matt. 6:21) Where Jesus Christ is, there will the heart that loves Him also be. Mark well His own precious word of promise "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." (John 12:26) Are you ever there? Do you find yourself soaring, as it were, above the things of time and sense to the Glorified Man before the Father's throne, of Whom dear Mushett could sing so sweetly,

The Man Who lived, and died, and rose

To perfume heaven with blood;

To Him, my soul her pardon owes,

And claims Him for her God.

There high He reigns in GLORY bright,

The Great Incarnate Word;

While suns to darkness dwindle quite

Before their radiant Lord.

Thence low He stoops to watch the lot

Of souls to Him once given;

And makes the dying sinner's cot

The glorious gate of heaven."

Do you find yourselves at times in spirit rising to that blessed place whither your Saviour Christ has gone before? He has gone there to possess in undisturbed security for you the place which the Father prepared

in His eternal counsels before the foundation of the world. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1) That is just what I like. I love to be found seeking and finding my Hope laid up for me in heaven, my love embracing the Lamb in the midst of the throne, my joy that of the Redeemer and His redeemed high in the heights of glory, and all this because Jesus, my Beloved, my Friend, and my All in all is there for me. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. 3:2) What is there in these cold regions of the faded leaf worth fixing our hearts upon? All down here "under the Sun" is "vanity and vexation of spirit." This very week a line or two from afar concerning a loved one at home has caused my heart to sing,

I shall be with Him when He comes,

Triumphant down the parting skies;

And when His voice breaks up the tombs,

Among His children I shall rise.

And with the singing the question would arise,

What right have I honestly to sing these words as my own? Well! this is my rejoinder,

What think ye of Christ? is the test,

To try both your state and your scheme;

You cannot be right in the rest,

Unless you think rightly of Him.

That verse reminds me of dear old Peter Bellinger, of Sharon, Schoharie County, in the State of New York. He was an honest, ungarnished, upright child of God. God gave him a place in my heart's affections. He would generally call to see me at my home in the hospitable abode of Permelia and Henry Winters, West Troy. He was slow in speech and of few words, and would generally say, "Well, and how is it to be?" "How is what to be?" "Shall we see you at Sharon this time?" "You will, by the will of God, see and hear me there." The last time he called to see me, over two years ago, after some little hesitation he said, "I wish you to tell me, Sir, where I shall find a verse I have heard you repeat many times: and that verse has got into my heart. It begins "I shall be with" Let me see "I shall be with Him when" He could get no further. I found the verse, saying, "There it is, Peter

I shall be with Him when He comes,

Triumphant down the parting skies;

And when His voice breaks up the tombs,

Among His children I shall rise.

"That is it, Sir," said Peter, "I should like them to put that on my gravestone when I am gone home." I looked at him seriously and said, "Do you honestly think you have a right to them? Are they true in your case?" After a pause, he answered deliberately, "Yes, I am bad enough for that: and He is good enough to save me. I believe His blood has washed away all my sins, and He has made me know it." Before I

crossed the Atlantic again he was gone home to his eternal rest. Before he left he expressed himself sick of the world, self and sin, and earnestly desired to be with Him Who loved him with an everlasting love. He left strict word that no yea and nay preacher, no Hagarene, should take part in his funeral service. No freewiller must officiate at his open grave. He said, "When Mr. Bradbury comes ask Him to gather you together at my grave and speak and pray as he would over his own people at home." Bless God, we did so. The very last service at Sharon last year was at Peter's grave, and a sweetly solemn service it was. This year I visited the sacred spot where the ashes of God's redeemed one lie. The first thing that struck my eyes was the modest marble stone marking his grave, and upon it in legible characters,

"I SHALL BE WITH HIM WHEN HE COMES,
TRIUMPHANT DOWN THE PARTING SKIES
AND WHEN HIS VOICE BREAKS UP THE TOMBS,
AMONG HIS CHILDREN I SHALL RISE."

I felt it true concerning Peter, and that I should not be left destitute of the Redeemer's company in that day. It is blessed when sickness, disease and languor tell their sad tales upon our frail tabernacle, to find our heart reposing in Him up yonder. We can then continue the song,

Among His children I shall stand,
When quick and dead His throne surround;
Blest with a place at His right hand,
And with immortal glory crowned.

A good reason is given for the mind to be set on things above "For ye are dead." Are you dead? Is that true concerning you this morning? It is true as truth itself concerning me. This death is set before us in many phases and features throughout God's most holy Word. We read of spiritual death in Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Adam did eat of the forbidden fruit, and that moment he became dead to God, at enmity with God, hostile to God. We are dead to God in the carrying out of His sentence of condemnation. On the ground of our oneness with the first Adam we are by nature spiritually dead. Die temporally we must, and eternally if grace prevent not. Look at this "Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." (Eph. 4:18) Now this is true in the case of every child of God, as well as in that of all the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam born into this world. We come into the world dead in sin, and dying: for the decree holds good "Dying, thou shalt die." (Gen. 2:17) "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it," (Eccles. 12:7) for Him to dispose of according to His sovereign will and good pleasure.

"Ye are dead." Spiritually one with Jesus Christ, "ye are also become dead to the law by the body of Christ." (Rom. 7:4) What a high privilege it is to know that when Christ was made a curse for us and died upon the accursed tree, we died judicially in Him. The sentence of the law having been executed in the sufferings and death of our Adorable Surety, we become dead to the law, and the law, being holy, just and good, has no further legal claims upon us. When the sentence of the law is executed upon a man, and the man lives no longer, what more can the law exact? No more. It is blessed to know that the law has claimed

and received every thing in the way of obedience and satisfaction from our Lord Jesus Christ; and because He has kept the law in the letter and in the spirit, in thought, look, word, feeling and faith, and all for us, we are dead to the law. He could say to the Father, and did say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." (John 17:4) With these words He ceased working. His active obedience was complete. His passive obedience and patient endurance of the dread wrath of God due to the sins of His people then began, and continued until the cry, which opened heaven and made the earth to tremble, escaped His sacred lips, "It is finished." (John 19:30) All that God required from Him on our account in the way of satisfaction and righteousness, there it was, and there it is, in the obedience and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

By His taking up His life again, and by the Father raising Him from the dead, ample proof is given of Christ's acceptance for us with the Father, and of our acceptance in Him. In His glorious ascension with great triumph into His kingdom in heaven, He appears as the Surety of saved sinnersthe Head of His electthe Husband of His bride the churchthe Shepherd of His flockthe Saviour of His body. Upon all this the faith of God's elect fastens, and rejoices in the fact that the claims of the law are all met and answered in the doing and dying of our Ascended Lord, and that all souls confiding in Him are dead to the law by His pierced and wounded body. As we are brought to behold the beauties of holiness in the service and finished work of Jesus Christ we become dead to the world by His mediatorial sufferings, and "reckon OUR-selves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:6-11)

"As by the light of opening day

The stars are all concealed:

So earthly pleasures fade away

When Jesus is revealed."

Here we are crucified, mortified, dead. Look here "I am crucified with Christ." (Gal. 2:20) I was crucified judicially with Christ on Calvary. I am crucified experimentally now, and shall be all the way home. Ah, says many a dark and doubting soul, but I want to feel. To which I answer, Dead men do not feel. "The dead know not anything," (Eccles. 9:5) and it is only when we are brought to know and prove this, that we are dead and can do nothing, nothing spiritually good, nothing after a heavenly and divine fashion, that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing, and though to will be present with us, how to perform that which is good we find not, then we discover ourselves to be dead to self, but alive to God, and that all the life we have is Christ Himself. As assuredly as the Spirit of life has entered into us, quickened us into spiritual life, and made Jesus precious to our hearts, we shall find ourselves "dead and done for" so far as spiritual, heavenly and divine things are concerned, and as they are found in us they are there according to the will of God in the Person of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Dead, yet living. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Look at that! O! what a blessed truth! Your life! What is your life? Christ. Christ where? Christ in me the hope of glory. This treasure is hidden from the world, for it seeth Him not neither knoweth Him. It has no heart for Him, no desiring eyes for His beauty. Not one of God's elect would have one desire for Him, not an enjoyment of Him as Saviour and Safeguard, but for the faithful witness of God the Ever-blessed Spirit, the Glorifier of the Father's Christ in the heart's experience of the Father's living children. Is it not a marvellous fact that the life of God in us is not only hidden from the world, but also from one another, aye, and frequently from our own personal enjoyment. What is it that hides God's life from us? Our likes and dislikes. Occupied with anything apart from Christ we discover to

our distress that the old man is still very troublesome, yet in our right mind we know that he is crucified and excluded from all consideration. May the Lord keep us from all thought of wretched self, and graciously hold us in the clear light of His all-absorbing presence, that we may know in a little measure even as we are known. "We know." Thank God for that! "In part." And thank God for that! "We know." That moves us with joy. "In part." That moves us with humility. What a blessed thing it is to view God's truth in His own light.

Life hidden denotes secrecy and security. Everything we know spiritually before God has been from God's own mouth, in company with Jesus Christ, for, "The Secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him." That is not a very high standard "with them that fear Him, and His covenant to make them know it." (Ps. 25:14) What a blessed privilege it is to be brought into secret communion with Jesus Christ and to learn from Himself our security in Him. Life hidden reminds one of that sentence in Gen. 1:11, "Whose seed is in itself, upon the earth." To reach the seed of an apple we must get to the heart of it. To get to the seed of God, Satan would like to, the heart of God must be reached. Satan cannot do it, sin cannot do it. It can not be done. The seed of God are hidden and secure. Kept! Kept!! Kept!!!"by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5)

God bless us all for Christ's sake. Amen.

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