

‘LIFE’ WITH CHRIST

Articles of Comfort and Blessings Offered to the Reader

*Through the year, we can encounter different views of issues dealing with the main and fundamental doctrines of our faith. Father Matta here gives a deep understanding of some of these issues, near to the heart of him who believes in the loving kindness of God. He specially concentrates on the writings of St John in his epistles. Enjoy! Note: All quotations are taken from the **New King James Version**, if not otherwise mentioned.*

Volume Three

Chapter 64

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”

(1 John 1: 1-4)

St John is very fond of the Word of God. He is the one who said in the prologue of his gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”¹ And here he goes on with this hymn, saying

¹ John 1:1.

that the Word is eternal life,² manifested in the appearance of Christ. St John underscores the truth about the Word by saying that they, i.e. the apostles, heard Him and saw Him with their eyes, beheld Him with all their senses and handled Him with their hands. He goes on to say that for him, to behold the Word Jesus Christ was to behold eternal life. He further adds that what they saw in Christ bears witness to the tidings that life eternal was with the Father and was manifested to them through the appearance of Christ.

This translates into the following: the good news means that the hearers and readers should have fellowship with John the Beloved, and the fellowship he calls for is nothing but the fellowship with the Father, and Son Jesus Christ. John further adds that the end of the good news is that the joy of his hearers and readers may be full.

What we can deduce from the opening verses of the First Epistle of John, is the burst of supreme joy, which John and the rest of the apostles felt upon discovering that Christ is Himself eternal life. He was from God, or with Him, then was sent by Him. Christ was manifested to them, and with Christ was manifested the truth about eternal life which was in Him. The apostle John says that his fellowship with the Father and Son and the manifestation of eternal life with the appearance of Christ overwhelmed him with joy. He passes on this same joy so that his readers and hearers may be happy in this fellowship, and the manifestation of eternal life.

St John in this epistle appears as an evangelist and a bearer of the Gospel with an apostolic spirit, rightly so, for one who saw, handled and touched the Word, Jesus Christ. It is a unique testimony of confirming the knowledge of eternal life and apostolic fellowship in the Father and Son. And we present the opening of this epistle to the dear reader so that he may believe a witnessed and felt truth, and it is a marvelous addition to faith in Christ because it verifies and confirms the tidings.

What is new for us is to learn that eternal life is indeed Christ Himself. This is how the apostle John takes a grip on eternal life, putting it within the sphere of human touch and vision. As such, faith in Christ has become the same as eternal life, and our acquisition of eternal life is the collateral of our faith in Christ. We used to say, whoever believes is saved and now after the good tidings of St John we can say, whoever has believed is saved and has entered eternal life. There is no temporal, spatial or logistical divide. What is eternal life? It is the extension of life in Christ forever.

² See also 1 John 5:20.

And so our faith in Christ increases in depth and wealth and exactly as St John says, in this knowledge is unsurpassed joy for our hearts, joy which derives from the eternal faith in Christ and His love and life in us.

We now sense the truth of the fellowship in the Father and Son which St John made the essence of his epistle. This truth encompasses the whole creed and contains not only distilled but above all assimilated theology. Faith in Christ had almost become independent, while faith in the Father had almost receded to a special corner of faith in Christ. But now after we have become assured of our fellowship with the Father and Son: a live, realistic, firm and permanent fellowship, it is pointed out that faith in Christ is the same as faith in the Father because the Father is not mentioned without the Son, nor the Son without the Father.

And so we have reached the end of what the apostle John means by his epistle and its opening lines.

November 7, 2005

Chapter 65

“Do not love the world or the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world

—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—

is not of the Father but is of the world.

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

(1 John 2: 15-17)

St John has a special way of looking at the world since he considers it a world of “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” a world which if man becomes occupied with, he can never love God. For St John, the world is divided into two: a natural and harmless world and a world of lusts of the flesh, full of amusements and distractions which occupy the heart of man and not only estrange him from, but make him an enemy of God. For St John, while the natural world remains for the natural man, for the one preoccupied with lusts, his is a world which is bound to end sooner or later.

St John is very clear on this point: whoever lusts after the world, not only estranges himself from God but cannot possibly love him. His world of lusts

passes away quickly even as he lives in the natural world.

This clearly means that whoever loves the world and its lusts has been lost to God. This is an immense loss for the one who lives for the world and continues in a state of stupor. Time seeps through his fingers and one day he is surprised by death while still far away from God. Futile remorse and sorrow will then set in for him and for all those who know him, in addition to his rejection in the life to come and deprivation of eternal life.

Now dear brethren, of what good to you is the world of the flesh and of lusts? The choice is yours regardless of your age. God's call stands even until the last day of man's life, so that even one—albeit old and stricken in years—might repent. The door, the door of eternal life, is open to every penitent who has come out of his stupor, looking for the Father and His eternal life.

What stops you from coming to Christ, leaving behind the trivia of this finite world? The apostle Paul says that he lost everything to gain Christ and considers what he has lost rubbish. He was ready to lose everything for the sake of Christ, and in order to win all His true and faithful promises.¹ This is the testimony of a Pharisee, son of a Pharisee, one who persecuted the church with a vengeance, as he himself says.² God called him and he responded and became the strongest apostle of the faith. He met with hostilities, brutal beatings and stoning which ended in fainting and his disciples thought him dead, “*and dragged him out of the city,*”³ but he got up as though nothing happened to him. In his trance, he was lifted up by the Spirit to the third heaven, or paradise, where he saw, heard and learned from the mysteries of Christ what cannot be uttered because of the profundity of the revelations.

Now dear brethren, is this testimony not enough? It is the testimony of an apostle who was a ruthless Pharisee, who had killed men and women believers and dragged them from their homes to prison. It was the worst kind of life, but he returned from the first call and became the apostle Paul, the apostle of the faith in Christ in all the corners of the world. And it is not only Paul of the old days, now new Christians have grabbed the faith, and Christ in the body even appeared to them, encouraged them and taught them the creed, and they have become witnesses in all the earth, telling of what God has done for them, and how they returned to the depth of the faith—to which they testify in public—after a life of vanity and blasphemy.

¹ See Phil 3:7-9.

² See Gal 1:13.

³ Acts 14:19.

These people have mocked the world and all its vanities and chose life in the faith. For that they experienced ridicule, harm, hostility, and were even hunted down until they left the country, all the while bearing witness, praising, and filling the hearts of their audience with verities of the faith which please all those who accept them.

To you dear reader, we offer this same invitation to receive Christ as Lord and God.

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