

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

THE LOVE of LIFE

Text: "Yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Job. 2:4.

Here in our text the speaker is Satan, and the father of lies, like many of his followers, has hit for once upon the truth.

"And Satan answered the Lord, and said, skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." That "skin for skin" is a proverbial expression. Perhaps it means he would give the skin of his arm to save the skin that covers his heart. Or perhaps it means that to save his own skin, he would give the skins of all his cattle—for wealth was measured by cattle in those days. But, at any rate, the underlying thought is that a man will give anything, everything, for his life. And it is on that love of life I wish to speak.



Rev. D.M. Clark

I do not think that I shall be gain-said when I say that this love of life is universal. Doubtless there are those who do not hold life so dearly: We have our suicides in every country. And doubtless, too, there are hours in every life when, in the words of Keats, we are half in love with easeful death. But these things are abnormal; they are the exceptions that help to prove the rule; they only bring into clearer relief that the love of life is a universal instinct. Is it a product of our civilization? The savage fights like a tiger against death. Is it the outcome of happiness and luxury? The beggar in the street clings to life as grimly as the lord of twenty thousand acres. It is an elementary passion of the heart. It is a universal instinct of the human race.

And I want you to note, too, that this love of life is not a passion for life in the abstract. It is a passion for my own individual being. That is important. There are dreamers of dreams, seers of visions among us. But it is not for a visionary life that my instinct craves. And it is not for a life in other realms that there is a deep-seated passion in my soul. My love of life is for my own personal life. It is for the life that I have known and lived, with all its limitations and with all its poverty, with all its failure and with all its pain. It is for this life that a man will he give all that he possesses.

And so by the road of nature do I reach the truth, that the life that God has given me is good. I know that I am a fallen man. I am corrupt and marred. I am out of gear and out of harmony. But I cannot believe that a universal instinct should hunger and thirst for what is evil.

God put that instinct here just for the preservation of his gift. For the truth is that unless we loved life so, I hardly know how we should live at all. There are some few for whom life is very sweet. It is a banquet, it is a joy, it is a song. And the music of life's allure so takes their heart that they could sit and listen forever to it. But is your life like that? Is there no weariness, no fever, no fret? Is there no dull monotony, no want of prospects? Is there no burden, no daily cross to bear? Is life worth living? But behind that there is another question. Is life worth loving?—and God has answered that himself, and put the love of life within us, and we must love it whether we will or not.

Jesus, who himself was crucified, said and still says, I came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

I want to ask, then, how it was possible for Jesus to say this? How could he justify the love of life, knowing as he did the pain and sin of life? The answer lies in Jesus' view of life. Christ took our human life and poured a flood of unexpected radiance on it. He flashed new light on it, discovered hidden glories, made it a new and more divine thing. And once we know what Jesus meant, the love of life becomes a holy passion.

For Jesus, life meant character, not merely

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eating and drinking. Life does not consist of the abundance of things that a man possesses. But to grow tender, merciful, true, trustful, that is life; and to grow hard, unclean, unkindly, that is death. And is there no place for pain in such a life? And have not trial and suffering been God's ministries to sweeten, to deepen, to purify, to bless? And my love of life is God's encouragement to me to rise, to play the man, to overcome, until I reach the likeness of my Lord.

For Jesus, life was fellowship with God, and God is a sharer in the agony and in the joy of things. There is no God in any living sense for any pessimist. For Jesus God, was Father, God was friend, living in every heartbeat of his child, sharing in every sorrow and true joy. And when over me there is an arch like that, and a companionship and a compassion that carry me forward in everlasting arms, life is no longer mean, it is magnificent, and the love of life becomes the love of God.

And lastly, for Jesus life on earth was the threshold of immortality, and the love of life the spark of an eternal flame. Why should I love to live when life is hard? Why should I clutch the cup and tremble lest I spill a single drop when every draught of the wine of life is bitter? It is not only because life is character. It is because my life shall last forever. I shall yet be in harmony with God; I shall be forever myself in being his, and the life of love with God for ever will at last make clear to me my love of life.

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