

THIS

IS
LIVING!

This
is
Living!

Isn't life terrific!

Maybe you don't agree. Maybe you don't have all the money you would like and you haven't been able to do and see all the things you would like to do and see. And it could be that you are lonely. Well, what's the answer?

I know just how you feel. I believe I have been the most dissatisfied fellow on this earth. I wanted life at its fullest. I wanted all the thrills and pleasure there were to be had, and I wanted to have all the things there were to enjoy. However, most of these things

Page One

I wanted I didn't have. And I figured that the main reason was because I didn't have the necessary money.

My folks were poor working people. But there was one thing different about my folks, they were genuine Christians. Just in case you don't know what a genuine Christian is, it's a person who has been converted from self and all his desires to satisfy himself—he has been converted from all this to a desire to please Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He has likewise come to the place where he is as much concerned for the welfare of others as he is for himself. And he is one who has trusted in Jesus Christ to forgive his sins and to give him everlasting life. Well, my folks were this kind of people.

We could have had a more expensive home, better furniture, a better car, etc., but my dad's greatest concern was to serve the Lord and to help others.

I don't know how you think about people who live like that, but I considered my dad a religious fanatic. I just couldn't see this business of wasting your whole life to please

Page Two

God and to help other people. I knew that for myself I was going to have a good time and I was going to have plenty of money.

When I was in my later teens I tried to help my dad to get wised up. I remember telling him at one time that he should be more concerned about really enjoying life, and that we as a family could surely use a lot more things than just sufficient food, clothing and a place to live.

But do you know what he said to me? He said, "Son, I lived many years of my life for myself alone. All I could see was the good times to be had and the things to be obtained. But then I came to see from the teachings of the Bible that this life is very short, and there is an endless eternity before us which we can live in a life that is vastly more real and wonderful than this life can ever be. But only those who are truly converted from sin and self to a life surrendered to our Lord will have any part in that life to come.

"And Son," he continued, "I'm doing the best I can to make up for the years I have wasted. There are so many who do not know

Page Three

the way that leads to eternal life, and I am seeking to do my best to spend my life in bringing this message to them in whatever way God enables me."

I tried to reason with him, but he just wouldn't listen. This life was so close to me and so real that I just couldn't get too excited about a life that was in the future. After all, I attended church. I had been baptized and had joined the church. I even took part in many of the church activities. I taught a Sunday School class, I sang in the choir, I was active in our Young People's work. What more did God expect of me!

Nevertheless, I began to realize that there *was* something lacking. I realized that God wanted ALL of me and not just a part of my life. He wanted *all* of my love, and He wasn't satisfied with anything less. In fact, when I look back on it now my greatest love at that time was for the *things* of this life. I wasn't really in love with God or with His teachings. I wanted to make sure that I got to Heaven, but I had a very selfish attitude about it. I wasn't concerned about others who wouldn't

Page Four

get there. At least I wasn't very much concerned.

I gave a tenth of whatever I earned to the church and to Christian work, and figured that it was none of God's business how I used the rest of my money or how I used my time. But that wasn't the way my dad and mother looked at it. Then the scriptures Mother and Dad showed me on the subject began to convince me that they were right. Also, every once in a while something in a sermon I heard would hit me hard. Dad's and Mother's lives were the greatest sermons. It's pretty tough on a sinner when he lives in a home where sermons are being lived right in front of his eyes. They didn't do much preaching but they did a powerful lot of real genuine Christian living.

Well, I kept my goal before me nevertheless, of having plenty of money and all that money could buy. I tried more than once to straighten Dad out, but he was too set in his beliefs for me to be able to make any headway with him.

I remember once asking him if he didn't wish he had a million dollars. I remember

Page Five

him thinking the question over a moment and then answering, "Yes, it would be wonderful to have a million dollars. But I'm afraid I wouldn't have it very long. There are so many who need the message of the Savior. A million dollars wouldn't go very far."

I asked him if he actually would give away a million dollars if he had it, the way he did with the money he earned now. He said, "Yes, the only way to keep it is to invest it with the Lord." Well, I'll admit I didn't understand him.

I remember well the Sunday when there had been a great missionary challenge in church. They took up a special missionary offering after that missionary challenge, and I saw my dad put in what amounted to almost a third of what he made in a week. I knew that he had already given a tenth of his income previous to that.

I had another session with Dad after that. I tried to make him come to his senses. Well, it didn't work. He just kept on living and giving.

All this living Christ before me and the

Page Six

preaching I would hear of straightforward messages once in a while really got me under conviction. I finally came to realize that Christ wasn't at all pleased with my life. I wasn't satisfied. I was having a lot of fun, at least I thought I was. But there was a deep emptiness within me.

Finally I prayed to the Lord, and I said, "Lord, I know that I'm not what I should be. But I also know that I'm not willing to be what You want me to be. But I'll tell You one thing, Lord, I'm willing for You to make me willing. If You can make me willing, that will be okay with me. So, Lord, I'm Yours. But I guess You will have to take me. Somehow You will have to make me willing to be and do what You want me to be and do."

I left it with that, believing that the Lord would somehow perform a miracle and make me want to do the things He wanted me to do, and to live a life that was truly consecrated to Him.

A whole year went by, and nothing happened. I kept living to get all I could for myself in the way of pleasure and money. I

Page Seven

wasn't too successful in either pursuit. But I was really working at it, and I had big plans for myself and for my life.

About a year after I made that prayer to the Lord I again got under real conviction about my hypocritical Christian life. I prayed to the Lord again and told Him about the same that I had told Him a year before. I reminded Him of the fact that I had given myself to Him, but that He was the one who was going to have to do something about it, evidently.

Following this I prayed to the Lord several times about the matter. I wanted to be a genuine Christian, but still I wanted to live my own life in the way that I pleased. I was afraid that if I surrendered my life fully to the Lord that He would make me do something that would be terribly disagreeable. How wrong I was!

One morning my brother and I were eating a late breakfast. We were both out of work at the time. The phone rang. Mother answered it, and it was the General Hospital calling. Dad had met with a slight auto accident on

Page Eight

his way to work, and if we wanted to see him we could come down to the hospital. Well, Mother got all excited. I didn't see anything to get excited about. It was just a slight accident, they said. But Mother wanted to get down to the hospital right away.

She took the streetcar there, and my brother and I continued with breakfast. As we sat in the living room after breakfast, we began to wonder just what had happened. My brother suggested that I call the hospital and ask them.

I did so. And the report I received was totally unexpected. I was told by the nurse who talked to me that Dad's chest was caved in and his skull was crushed. I was dumbfounded.

Immediately my brother and I got into my small car and we went to the school near by and got my younger brother and sister out of class. We told them what had happened and suggested that they had better come with us. Another brother and sister were younger still, and we thought it best to say nothing to them about the accident.

Page Nine

When we arrived at the hospital we immediately went into the waiting room where Mother was. A cousin was also there. It was a small waiting room and only our family members were present. A moment after we arrived the doctor stepped in. I stepped up to him immediately and said, "Doctor, we want to see Dad right away."

The doctor looked at me and said, "I don't believe you really mean that. I believe you would rather remember your dad as you saw him last. Your dad is very badly hurt. I don't believe he will live much longer."

My dad! Dying? It just couldn't be. Such things happened to others, but they didn't happen to us. They just couldn't.

The doctor left us alone after saying these words. The door to the waiting room was shut, and we all went to our knees in prayer immediately. We cried to the Lord to spare our dad. I prayed as I had never prayed before. I prayed with tears, something I had never done. I had never before been in such earnest prayer.

I suppose about ten minutes passed when

Page Ten

the door again opened and the doctor re-entered. We immediately got up from our knees and stood there to hear what he had to say now.

He stood there quietly for a moment and then said simply, "Dad has passed away."

I was absolutely stunned. It just couldn't be. I couldn't think of my dad as dead. I could only think of him as alive, and living a wonderful Christian life for his Lord. I had never known him any other way.

Shortly before this he had purchased several Bibles. He had planned to go house to house to find the homes where they did not have a Bible and to offer them one. He was not a man with great talents. He couldn't preach or sing, or serve the Lord in any spectacular way. But he served in true love to the very best of his ability. And now the doctor said that this life was gone!

When the awfulness of reality finally penetrated our minds we wept as babes for this one who had been so dear to us as a father, and who had been so faithful to us and to his Lord in his life and service.

Page Eleven

Later that morning two of my brothers and myself were in the funeral parlor arranging for Dad's funeral. We were alone in the lounge as we waited there to talk to the funeral director.

I remember sitting in a large chair, and I began to do some deep and serious thinking. Dad's life on earth was ended. He had served his Lord with his means and with his time. Many were the hours that he had spent alone with the Lord in prayer.

I had considered my dad a religious fanatic. I had considered that he had gone entirely overboard on the matter of this business of living for the Lord. But as I sat in that funeral parlor and thought of his life which had been lived for his Lord, and which was now ended, I wondered to myself, "Just who is the foolish one?" Dad had lived for the life that is to come, which will be life in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord, a life that will never end. He had lived for the rewards to be obtained in that life.

And as I sat there I realized that Dad had lived his life in great wisdom. He had invested

his abilities and his time in treasures of untold and eternal values.

Then I considered my own life. If I had been the one to die that day, what would have been my inheritance in the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ? I realized that I would have died as a poor man, having lived mainly for myself. It was questionable whether I was even a Christian. I came to realize as I sat there that all I had spent on self was gone. And all that I might accumulate in life for myself I would immediately lose at death.

As these thoughts began to enter my mind I stood up and began to walk back and forth on that carpeted floor. The truth, the tremendous truth of the values which are real and everlasting began to take hold of me. Suddenly, in that room, I lost all desire to attain the things of this life. I came to realize that my life, and whatever I might gain in wealth and pleasures here, were of very temporary value. Only as I invested my time and God-given abilities under the direction of my Lord could I expect wealth and joys that would be mine to enjoy forever. I saw that

these assets of time, abilities, and opportunities here could be changed into the currency and securities which would pay dividends forever in the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ.

I have never lost the vision nor zeal for eternal rewards since that day.

Christ had answered my prayer—but at awful cost. He had made me willing to do His will.

You likewise have been given a life to live. What are you doing with it? What are your plans for the future? Are you seeking the pleasures and enjoyments of this present life? Is that where you are right now? If so, I understand your feelings very well. I was there.

But how rich life has now become for me. I truly thought that if I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ everything would be lost. I feared that He would send me to places I did not want to go, and that He would ask me to do things which would be drudgery and boring. How wrong I was.

Do you realize that you cannot outgive

Page Fourteen

the Lord? He has riches, pleasures and enjoyments to give even in this life which are beyond imagination. He wants you to learn to really live! You will only really live when you die to yourself and surrender completely to your Lord.

Here is a scripture I would like you to read with me. You'll find it in the New Testament in Mark, chapter 8, verse 34. Jesus said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

A cross is something on which to die. Christ calls you to die to yourself and to all of your own personally determined ambitions, and to come to Him on the terms of *unconditional surrender*. Then *He* will direct your life, and it will be more glorious and more rewarding both in the life you live on this earth and in the life that is to come than you could ever imagine.

Christ likewise gave warning in this same scripture, because He continued the words I just quoted with the following words, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but

Page Fifteen

whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Millions of persons around the world have the misconceived idea today that all they need to do to become Christians and to receive everlasting life from Christ is to believe on Him as their Savior. But you will notice in this scripture that you must likewise believe on Him as your Lord. Unless Christ is your Lord you are not truly converted to Him. And Christ says here in these words that if you are determined to save this present life of yours for your own self and to live it as you wish, you will lose it! And He is not speaking here of simply losing rewards. You notice that in the next sentence He says, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Yes, this is a matter of eternal life or death.

In order to be a Christian one must be born again. To be born again means that your life is changed. The old YOU must be crucified, and a new life must take its place. To

Page Sixteen

become a Christian you must become converted—converted from your selfish, sinful way, to a fervent desire and purpose to go God's way!

It is many times said that preachers of the gospel preach of pie in the sky by and by. However, notice what Jesus Christ says to Peter in Mark 10:28-30. The rich young ruler had just been talking to Christ, asking Him what he must do in order to inherit eternal life. Christ had then put His finger on the thing which was this rich man's god—his money. But this rich young man had refused to invest his money in the way Christ directed him. Then we read these words—

"Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold, now, in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

Page Seventeen

Do you notice that Christ says this to the one who has surrendered all things fully to Him? He shall receive "NOW, in this time"—in other words, IN THIS LIFE, all these promises of a one-hundred-fold return.

Another person writing on this promise of the Lord has said this—

"Here Jesus promises you a 100-fold return if you invest *all* for Him. That's 10,000 per cent—which is 2,500 times the return of a savings bank, 1,428 times the return on a 7 per cent bond, and 50 times the return on a deal that will double your money.

"If there ever was an ideal investment, this is it! If you have not accepted Jesus' offer, is it because you think He is *wrong*? Or do you think He is *fooling you*?"

I want to testify to you, dear friend, that the Lord has made all of this real to me. He has brought me into realms and opportunities which are tremendous and wonderful! I am really living, and enjoying it to the hilt. Yes, there are persecutions as Christ promised. It takes fervent desire and determined purpose to stand up for Jesus Christ.

Page Eighteen

Be assured of this—when you make that total surrender to the Lord He will help you and will give you strength and courage. He will give you opportunities to really live this life.

The Lord has promised that all that you give up for Him will be made up to you 100-fold. It may be made up to you in ways that you had not expected or planned. But they will be more wonderful than you ever could have planned.

As wonderful as the promises are for God's blessing in this life—the promised blessings and rewards in His eternal kingdom are even greater. Christ spoke many times of the rewards to be obtained for faithful service. One is not to consider himself self-centered if he seeks to serve the Lord faithfully and to thereby obtain eternal rewards. Every appeal Christ gave to His disciples to seek eternal rewards He gave with the motive of self-interest. Christ is pleased when we seek to better ourselves in regard to our position and opportunities in His kingdom. He asks us to die to self here, but to live for self and His glory in regard to the life that is to come.

Page Nineteen

You have a life to live. How wonderful! But what are you doing with it? What are your plans for your life? Will you place your life completely at the disposal of Jesus Christ and make full surrender to Him? He died for your sins on Calvary's cross. He will forgive your sins and give you everlasting life if you will believe on Him as your Savior and as your Lord.

Possibly you have believed on Him as your Savior for many years, but you have neglected to surrender to Him as your Lord. Will you make the decision with me, the decision which cost me so much because of my unwillingness to surrender willingly? If I had it to do all over again, knowing what I know now, I would make that decision without hesitation. I so highly recommend it to you.

Christ has a work for YOU to do. It may possibly be at home—or abroad. It may be He would have you serve Him in your business, your home, or in the full time ministry of His word. No matter who you are or where you are God has an important work for you. Through this message and testimony God has

Page Twenty

possibly been speaking very personally to you. What is your answer? Will you make this the day of your decision for Christ your Lord, and *really begin to live?*

You can begin living for Him and serving Him by reading a chapter or more each day from your Bible. You need a foundation on which to build, and God's Word is the foundation. The Bible contains two main sections, the Old and New Testaments. Read from both Testaments.

In the Old Testament begin at the beginning, in the book of Genesis. When you come to long lists of names or laborious explanations of sacrifices you should skip these. Don't let yourself get bogged down with these sections which may cause you to lose interest.

In the New Testament begin with the 18th verse of chapter one of Matthew. You thereby omit the long record of genealogy and start right in with the interesting story of the birth of Christ.

And the Lord will so appreciate the

Page Twenty-one

moments now and then throughout the day when you turn your thoughts to Him, and talk things over with Him. He wants your friendship and fellowship. And He wants to do many things in and through you.

Christ promised just before He left this earth, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." He also stated at the same time, "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth." Think what that means! He has promised to be with us always, with unlimited power at His command. You will find these words recorded in Matthew, chapter 28.

As He finds you faithful, in allowing Him to teach you and to lead you through the reading of His word and through prayer, then He will begin to put His power to work through you. May God grant you a glorious life in His service, wherever and however He leads you.

"Only one life. 'Twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ shall last."

The testimony in this booklet is the testimony of Ray W. Johnson, founder and director of Life Messengers—a ministry which is now reaching millions yearly throughout the world, with the message of Christ the Savior.