
SALVATION IS FOR LIFE

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Jesus and the early Apostles preached a salvation radically different from the kind of salvation being preached today. They spoke of a life in the kingdom of God encompassing all of human existence, both here and hereafter. The circumference of their message embraces 360 degrees.

This understanding of salvation stands in stark contrast to the two views of salvation that reign supreme today. The first is a theology from the right, which thinks of salvation primarily in terms of heaven after we die. The second is a theology from the left, which understands salvation primarily in terms of social and economic liberation on earth. These fragmentary half-gospels miss the heart of the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, which is a radically new life—a daily life we receive from God.

The failure on the right is a blindness to the fact that salvation is for here and now as well as for there and then. The failure on the left is its inability to have any redemptive word for life beyond the grave. Most striking of all, both fail to address the means for transforming the human personality into Christlikeness, and neither gives sufficient attention to the radical fellowship-forming power that comes from rightly understanding and proclaiming the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.

A NEW ORDER OF LIFE

The salvation that is in Jesus Christ is a new order of life. St Paul writes, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of *life* in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:1–2, emphasis added). Paul is here using a very specific word to identify the secret of our life which is “hidden with

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Christ in God” (Col 3:3): *zōē*, the eternal, uncreated life that originates in God alone.

Scripture identifies two types of life: *bios*, physical, created, mortal life; and *zōē*, the spiritual, uncreated, eternal life. Likewise, there are two types of death: *teleutē*, physical death; and *thanatos*, spiritual death. Thus, it is entirely possible for a person to be physically alive (*bios*) while spiritually dead (*thanatos*). But the salvation that is in Jesus Christ immerses us into the hidden reservoir of divine love and power, bringing into our lives God’s life (*zōē*) and forming us into communities of Jesus’ disciples who are enabled to express his life and love through our own lives, individually and corporately.

Jesus declares, “I am come that they might have life (*zōē*), and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10 KJV). In his first Epistle, John writes, “God gave us eternal life (*zōē*), and this life (*zōē*) is in his Son” (1 John 5:11). And Paul writes, “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life (*zōē*)” (Rom 5:10). Life. Life. Life. No wonder Dallas Willard comments, “the simple and wholly adequate word for salvation in the New Testament is ‘life.’”¹

This helps explain why the dominant message in Acts focuses on Jesus’ resurrection rather than his death. While the cross of Jesus was never far from the thinking of the preachers of Acts, the accent was always centered on the resurrection of Jesus and the life that comes from him.²

We are so prone to settle for less than what God desires for us.

“We are being saved by his life,” declare the Apostles, and Jesus’ resurrection convinced them that this life, this *zōē*, was indestructible. The glorious words, “He is risen,” proved to the disciples that the new life that had been ever-present to them in the person and teaching of Jesus could not be destroyed by killing the body. That life, that *zōē*, continues on. It cannot be destroyed: “the gates of Hades will not prevail against it” (Matt

¹Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 37.

²This emphasis on new life rather than on death also helps us understand the reason for the late emergence of the cross as a Christian symbol. Kenneth Clark writes, “In the first art of Christianity it [the cross] hardly appears; and the earliest example, on the doors of Santa Sabina (built AD 430) in Rome, is stuck away in a corner almost out of sight.” Kenneth Clark, *Civilization: A Personal View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 29. The early disciples focused on Jesus’ resurrection life rather than on his death because it was his life that gave them life. The cross was present in their thinking and experience as the point at which his life triumphed by breaking the power of sin over human beings, a reality that the resurrection validated. Always the stress was upon the life that Jesus has and gives to his followers.

16:18). And it is this unquenchable, indestructible *zōē* that Jesus offers to all who trust in him—“life” here and now and on into eternity.

Jesus’ resurrection was for those disciples (and is for us) the great eschatological fact of all time. His life, his *zōē*, is available to everyone. All who trust in him can experience his life in them; “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 2:27). Likewise, all who trust in him are “in Christ” (2 Cor 1:21 and others). Christ “in us” and us “in Christ”—a new order of life “from above” (John 3:3). Colossians 3:4 succinctly summarizes it, “Christ who is your life (*zōē*)”—that is the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

THE DARING GOAL

I will return shortly to flesh out how it is that Jesus’ life is mediated to us. But first we need to understand clearly the daring goal of the salvation that is in Jesus Christ. And I must begin by stating flatly what that goal is not: The goal of salvation is *not* to get us into heaven. Properly understood, heaven is not a goal at all, but a destination. Heaven is vitally important, and it is part of the package, if you will, but it must never be the center of our attention. Heaven is only a glorious byproduct of something far more central. Salvation is a *life*, and when we have this life, this *zōē*, physical death becomes merely a minor transition from this life to greater life. Since, in Christ, we become unceasing spiritual beings with an eternal destiny in God’s great universe, we can look forward to the greater expression of this life in heaven, but our focus should be upon the new order of life we now have in Jesus Christ. The real issue is not so much us getting into heaven as it is getting heaven into us. Besides, when we do get to heaven, we want to be the kind of person who will be inclined to stay there. We must always remember that the purifying fires of heaven are hotter than the fires of hell.

The daring goal of the Christian life is an ever-deeper re-formation of our inner personality so that it reflects more and more the glory and goodness of God; an ever more radiant conformity to the life and faith and desires and habits of Jesus; an utter transformation of our creatureliness into whole and perfect daughters and sons of God. You see, this life, this *zōē* that comes from God and is the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, is a character-transforming life. It does not leave us where we are but changes us as we progress from faith to faith (that is, from the faith we have to the faith we have yet to receive) and from strength to strength and from glory to glory.³

God is intent upon making each of us into “a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright, stainless mirror that reflects back

³This, in a strict sense, is the penultimate goal; the ultimate goal being “to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever,” to use the language of the Westminster Catechism. But, of course, to glorify God and enjoy him genuinely and completely, we must become a certain kind of person, a person whose life has been taken over by the fruit of Galatians 5:22–3. Hence, the “daring goal” as I describe it.

to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness.”⁴

To be sure, the full realization of this “perfect reflection” awaits our glorification in heaven. But even now we need to hear the goal spoken over us again and again so that we may more consciously enter into the process that leads to this goal. God does not wait until death to initiate this process of complete transformation. It begins now, and God can and will do far more here and now than we can possibly imagine. We may not be perfect yet, but we can become a whole lot better than we are.

You see, we are so prone to settle for less than what God desires for us. We are glad enough for God to remove some irritating behavior from our personality (like a sour disposition) or some destructive addiction (like alcoholism), but it is a very different thing when God begins a fundamental restructuring of our inner affections. We may be willing to give up honors and possessions and even friends, but it touches us too closely to disown our own selves. But we simply must understand that God is not seeking to improve us, but to transform us—to show us who he really created us to be. C. S. Lewis writes that “the goal towards which [God] is beginning to guide you is absolute perfection; and no power in the whole universe, except you yourself, can prevent Him from taking you to that goal.”⁵

PURITY OF HEART

This fundamental transformation of the self begins with the work of God upon the heart—and for good reason, for the heart is the wellspring of human action. All of the devotional masters call us constantly (almost monotonously) toward purity of heart. The great Puritan divines, for example, gave sustained attention to this “heart-work.” In *Keeping the Heart*, John Flavel, a seventeenth-century English Puritan, notes that the “greatest difficulty in conversion, is to win the heart to God; and the greatest difficulty after conversion, is to keep the heart with God. . . . Heart-work is hard work indeed.”⁶

When we are dealing with this “heart-work,” external actions—this set of ethical practices or that set of observances—are never the center of attention. Specific actions are a *consequence*, a natural result of something far deeper, far more profound. The scholastic maxim, *actio sequitur esse*, reminds us that action is always in accordance with the essence of the person who acts.⁷ This, of course, does not reduce good works and acts of charity to insignificance, but it does make them matters of secondary significance, effects rather than initial causes. Of primary significance is our vital union with God, our “new creation” in Christ, our immersion in

the Holy Spirit. It is this “life” that purifies the heart. When the branch is truly integrated into the vine—united with the vine and receiving its life wholly from the vine—then good spiritual fruit is a natural result (John 17). Action follows essence.

This is why the moral philosophers can say, “Virtue is easy.” When the heart is purified by the action of the Spirit, the most natural thing in the world is the virtuous thing. To the pure in heart, vice is what is hard.

So the constant appeal of the devotional masters to purification of heart is an important word to us. It is no vain thing for us to return to our first love over and over and over again. It is an act of faith to continually cry out to God to search us and know our heart and root out every wicked way in us (Ps 139:23). This, too, is the salvation of the Lord.

We are—each and every one of us—a tangled mass of motives; hope and fear, faith and doubt, simplicity and duplicity, honesty and falsity, openness and guilt. God knows our hearts better than we can ever know our own. God is the only one who can separate the true from the false; he alone can purify the motives of the heart. But God does not come uninvited. If chambers of our heart have never experienced God’s healing touch, perhaps it is because we have not welcomed divine scrutiny.

The most important, the most real, the most lasting work is accomplished in the depths of our hearts. This work is solitary and interior. It cannot be seen by anyone, even we ourselves. It is a work known only to God. It is the work of heart purity, soul conversion, life formation.

Though we cannot see the work itself, we can detect some of its effects. We enter a new firmness of life orientation. We experience a life of unhurried peace and power. We begin seeing everything in the light of God’s overriding governance for good. And most amazing of all is the abiding, unconditional warm regard we feel for all people.

PROGRESS IN LIFE FORMATION

Now, I want to express a word of encouragement to you at this point. We can have realistic hope for genuine progress in character transformation. This needs to be said today, for many people have simply given up on any movement forward in the spiritual life. Sometimes this despair is the product of theologies of perfectionism to which we know our lives do not measure up, so we feel our situation is hopeless. Other times it is the product of theologies that suggest that any real change must await another dispensation or that, since we are clothed in the “alien righteousness of Christ,” we should not expect any individual regeneration of character.⁸ The first group needs to understand the value of progress in the spiritual life; the second needs to understand that Christ’s power to save is never separated from his power to make holy.

⁴C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 160.

⁵*Ibid.*, 158.

⁶John Flavel, *Keeping the Heart* (Grand Rapids, MI: Sovereign Grace, 1971), 5, 12.

⁷As noted in Thomas Merton, *Life and Holiness* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Image, 1964), 57.

⁸The doctrine of imputed righteousness, when rightly understood, assumes the ongoing work of sanctification. The Bible makes no clear demarcation between objective righteousness and subjective righteousness, for the simple reason that the biblical writers would find it ludicrous to speak of having one without the other.

The salvation that is in Jesus Christ is not limited to the forgiveness of sins; it is also able to overcome sin's dominion in our daily lives. Charles Wesley stated this truth quite well in a line of his famous hymn "O, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing": "He breaks the power of canceled sin, He sets the prisoner free; His blood can make the foulest clean; His blood availed for me."⁹ You see, it is quite possible to have sin canceled (forgiven), yet still be subject to its power over our lives. But Jesus' salvation life, which pervades our hearts, is intended to go beyond simply forgiving sins to breaking sin's power in our daily lives.

Paul declares that we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Eph 2:10). Sin no longer needs to reign in our mortal bodies. We *can* walk in newness of life. We *can* yield our arms and legs and eyes and ears and brain to God as "instruments of righteousness." We *can* be "conformed to the image of his Son," Jesus Christ (Rom 6:12–4, 8:29). Indeed, Paul tells us that we are "predestined" to just such a life formation (Rom 8:29). Jesus' expiation on the cross paid sin's debt, broke sin's power, overcame sin's dominion, and opens the way for us to enter into Christ's life not only in the life to come but also in our daily lives here and now.¹⁰

GRACE, GRACE, AND MORE GRACE

Now, all of this new life comes to us by the grace of God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith," says Paul, "and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8–9). Grace is the action of God bringing to pass in our lives good things that we neither deserve nor can accomplish on our own. It is this tremendous dynamic of personal experience, in which the reality of God's life enters into what we are doing and feeling and thinking, and the grace-filled power of Jesus' life moves into every aspect of our own. Grace is, of course, "unmerited favor," but the form it takes is not usually as "credit" to our account. No, the form it most commonly takes is an interactive relationship between God and us: God's initiating action and our responding action.¹¹ And the transforming results of this dynamic interplay are all from God, all the work of grace. We know that we have done nothing more than receive a gift.

But, do not misunderstand; there *are* things for us to do: daily. Grace never means inaction or passivity. In ordinary life we will encounter multiplied moments of decision where we must engage the will, saying "Yes!" to God's will and God's way.

⁹*The Book of Hymns: Official Hymnal of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Board of Publication of the Methodist Church, 1979), 1.

¹⁰I am well aware of the various theories of the atonement such as ransom, satisfaction, substitution, moral influence, and more. But we must never (as is so common today) replace regeneration with a theory of the atonement. It is the life, the regeneration, that is central to the salvation that Jesus brings.

¹¹Human response is itself a work of grace, "prevenient grace," as the theologians put it.

You see, the opposite of grace is works, but not effort. "Works" has to do with earning, and there simply is nothing any of us can do to earn God's love or acceptance. And, of course, we don't need to. God already loves us utterly and perfectly, and God's complete acceptance of us is our free gift from God through Jesus Christ our Lord. In God's amazing grace we live and move and have our being. But this grace and this life propel us forward into substantial spiritual formation, where we will find ourselves engaging in effort of the most strenuous kind. As Jesus says, we "*strive* to enter through the narrow door" (Luke 13:24, emphasis added). And Peter urges us to "make every *effort* to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love" (2 Pet 1:5–7, emphasis added).

THE FOUNDATIONAL MEANS OF GRACE

In his second epistle, Peter calls upon us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3:18). The foundational structure for this growth in grace involves a training of body, mind, and spirit by means of the disciplines of the spiritual life. These disciplines are the God-ordained "means of grace" for becoming the kinds of persons and the kinds of communities that can fully and joyfully enter into abundant living.¹² These means involve us in a process of intentional "training . . . in godliness" (1 Tim 4:7).

What are these spiritual disciplines? Oh, they are many and varied: fasting and prayer, study and service, submission and solitude, confession and worship, meditation and silence, simplicity, frugality, secrecy, sacrifice, celebration, and the like. These well-recognized activities are ways by which we, along with generations of Christians, quite literally present our bodies as "a living sacrifice" to God (Rom 12:1). And God takes our little offering and produces changes within that we can hardly imagine or hope for. Through a lifelong process, we become, little by little, with time and experience, the kinds of people whose lives naturally and freely express "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22–3). This, too, is the salvation of the Lord.

¹²I am aware that the phrase "means of grace" is used differently in the various traditions. Martin Luther, for example, confines the phrase to baptism, Eucharist, and the right preaching of the Word. "The means of grace," declares Luther's *Small Catechism*, "are the Gospel in Word and Sacrament." *Luther's Small Catechism*, ed. C. Gausewitz (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1956), 191. John Wesley, on the other hand, speaks of "means of grace" in a broader context as "outward signs, words, or actions," and specifically mentions disciplines like prayer and Scripture study. John Wesley, "The Means of Grace" (Sermon 16), available online at <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-16.stm> (3 May 2004). In general, I am following Wesley's broader use of the phrase to include spiritual disciplines, and later will even include some of the more everyday experiences of life as "means of grace," that is, ways whereby God mediates his life to us, thereby transforming our character.

When we engage in the spiritual disciplines, we are seeking the righteousness of the kingdom of God through “indirection.” We cannot, by direct effort, make ourselves over again into the kinds of people who are able to live fully alive to God. Only God can accomplish this in us and for us. Only God can incline our hearts to him. Only God can reprogram the deeply ingrained habit-patterns of sin and negativity that constantly predispose us toward evil, transforming them into even more deeply ingrained habit-patterns of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). And God freely and graciously invites us to participate in this transforming process. But not on our own.

We do not, for example, become humble merely by trying. Action on our own would make us all the more proud of our humility. Instead, we train with spiritual disciplines appropriate to our need—for instance, numerous acts of service for others that will incline us toward the good of all people. This indirect action will place us—body, mind, and spirit—before God as a living sacrifice. God then takes this little offering of ourselves and, in his time and in his way, produces in us things far greater than we could ever ask or think—in this case a life growing in and overflowing with the grace of humility. It is, to repeat, the righteousness of the kingdom of God by indirection.

THE EVERYDAY MEANS OF GRACE

While the classical disciplines of the spiritual life are the foundation for our formation, they are far from the only means. Often God uses the various difficulties and trials we face in daily life to produce in us a kind of patient endurance (Jas 1:2–3). At other times, God uses the interactive exchange that goes on between ourselves and the Holy Spirit to develop a spirit of trusting surrender within us. Or to grow our faith. Then again, God will often use human beings and other physical means to mediate his life to us. All of these things shape us, form us, and make us substantively different people, to the extent we become willing participants in this work of grace. We can stop our growing conformity to Christ at any point. God, in his wisdom and sovereign freedom, has given us veto power over our own transformation. This is the dignity he bestows upon us as free moral agents made in the image of God’s own sovereign freedom.

Further, the Spirit is most patient, waiting for us to come to our senses and appreciate for ourselves the true goodness of rightness. God is determined to pursue this good work in us to the very end. C. S. Lewis observes, “The command *Be ye perfect* is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. [God] is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. . . . He meant what He said. Those who put themselves in His hands will become perfect, as He is perfect—perfect in love, wisdom, joy, beauty, and immortality.”¹³

¹³Lewis, 160–1.

The transformation of ourselves into the likeness of Christ will not be fully completed in this life, for, as Lewis notes, “death is an important part of the treatment.”¹⁴ How far each one of us moves forward into Christlikeness here in this life depends upon a whole host of complex factors, not the least of which is the emotional, mental, and psychological package we were given at birth. Such factors can either give us a good running start or handicap us enormously. Even with all the complex interplay between heredity, environment, and other factors too numerous to mention, we still can and should expect substantial movement forward into Christlikeness in this life.

TWO CONTRADICTIONARY SOUNDING COMMENTS

I want to make two comments about this “growth in grace”; comments that will sound strangely contradictory but in fact fit together quite nicely. First, in our thinking and our living, we need to make generous allowance for infusions of divine grace that produce in us quantum leaps forward.¹⁵ These, as best I can understand, are utterly sovereign acts of God. We in no way cause them to happen, and they seem unconnected to our efforts in any discernable way. These are glorious acts of God for which the only sane response is to fall to our knees in worship, adoration, and praise.

My second comment stresses the other side of the coin. We have a part to play in this “growing in godliness,” as the Puritans were fond of calling it. Effort on our part is called for. Real effort. (Remember, these efforts are flowing out of an overall life under grace.) Graciously, God invites us to work in cooperation with the Spirit through spiritual disciplines appropriate to our needs and through the various other means of grace.

The apostle Paul beautifully unites these two sides of the same coin when he urges us to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12–3).

Now this ordinary, everyday means of character transformation lacks the fireworks of the special infusions of grace. Also, to us it seems painfully slow, though the transforming work is always at a rate consistent with the nature of the virtue being sought. Francis de Sales writes, “The ordinary purification and healing, whether of the body or of the mind, takes place only little by little, by passing from one degree to another with labor and patience. . . . The soul that rises from sin to devotion may be

¹⁴Ibid., 161.

¹⁵Various names have been given to these powerful experiences, and whole theologies have grown up around them. While I in no way want to minimize the importance of these differing theologies, my concern here is to show how these experiences reflect a common reality. God, in sovereign grace, at times moves individuals (and even whole groups) dramatically forward in the spiritual life. Frequently, these experiences have a substantial, even hypostatic, effect on character formation.

compared to the dawning of the day, which at its approach does not expel the darkness instantaneously but only little by little.”¹⁶

It is easy for us to undervalue this most fundamental means of grace. It appears so commonplace, so quiet, so modest, so unimpressive. But it is our primary means of growth. God has ordained that it be so. Through it, God invites us to be participants in the work of grace, “labourers together with God,” as Paul says (1 Cor 3:9 KJV).

Besides, these two realities actually work hand in glove. Our bodies, minds, and souls need shaping and preparing for any special infusion of grace. On our own, we are insufficient receptacles to contain the divine blessing. We would simply burst apart, like old wineskins filled with new wine (Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37–8). Therefore, we should always value this ordinary way (this intolerably slow way) of growth, for through it God prepares us for things we can hardly imagine: heaven, for example. This is all part of the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

JESUS THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PROPHET

Earlier, I promised to return to the matter of how this *zōē* life from God is mediated to us. Put simply, it is mediated through Jesus’ active, living, functioning presence. Jesus is not only alive and present in the midst of his new covenant people; he is alive and present among us in all his many “offices.” To say this is to confess a highly *functional* view of Christ. At one point, the seventeenth-century Christian leader George Fox exclaimed, “Christ Jesus, who was dead and is alive again, and lives forevermore, a prophet, counselor, priest, bishop and shepherd, a circumciser and baptizer, a living rock and foundation for evermore, the beginning and ending, the first and last, the Amen.”¹⁷ This was Fox’s way of expressing Jesus’ multiple functions among his people. Jesus forgives, teaches, guides, comforts, oversees, rules, and so much more. The point is that Jesus acts and works.

John Calvin brought the threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and king into dogmatic theology.¹⁸ A good deal of theological reflection has been done on Jesus’ priestly office, and some has been done on his kingly office. However, theological reflection on Jesus’ prophetic office is almost nonexistent. This is unfortunate, for the office of Christ as prophet has much to teach us with regard to salvation as a *life*.

Oscar Cullmann suggests that, in Jesus’ day, one strand of messianic expectation was of an eschatological prophet like Moses who would teach

the people.¹⁹ The key Hebrew passage for this expectation is Deuteronomy 18:15–8: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. . . . I [Yahweh] will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.” In the Acts of the Apostles, both Peter and Stephen quote from this passage, identifying Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophet like Moses. Indeed, both of them assert that the eschatological prophet like Moses and the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah are one and the same (Acts 3:22, 7:37).²⁰

And what is the function of this “prophet like Moses”? He is to speak to and teach the people. In the great transfiguration event, when Jesus appears filled with light on the mountain before his disciples, the voice from the bright cloud declares, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” (Matt 17:5).²¹ The letter to the Hebrews, which makes so much of Jesus’ priestly office, opens with the dramatic words, “At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son” (1:1–2 JB). There we have it: Christ, the prophet like Moses, is to speak and teach; we, his disciples, are to listen and obey.

MEANING FOR TODAY

What does all this mean for us today? It means that Jesus Christ is alive and active. It means that he is present among us as the eschatological prophet who will, as George Fox put it, teach his people himself. He continues to speak and to teach. His voice is not hard to hear. His vocabulary is not difficult to understand. He *will* teach us. Now. Jesus is a living Savior and the salvation that is in him includes teaching us how to live and re-forming our very selves. Dallas Willard puts it well: “I am learning from Jesus to live *my* life as he would live my life if he were I [sic].”²² Remember, we are not learning how to live Jesus’ life (that has already been lived); we are learning how to live our lives as Jesus would live them, if he were us. Jesus is the master Teacher. He knows how our

¹⁶Francis de Sales, *An Introduction to the Devout Life*, ed. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 43–4.

¹⁷George Fox, *The Works of George Fox*, vol. 8 (Philadelphia and New York: Gould and Hopper, 1831), 153.

¹⁸Calvin did not include the office of “prophet” in the first edition of *The Institutes*, but added it in the second edition. Unfortunately for us, he did not make much theological use of it.

¹⁹Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963). See especially ch. 2, “Jesus the Prophet.” See also Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner’s, 1965); Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), and Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (New York: World, 1969).

²⁰See Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

²¹Many scholars feel that Matthew’s “listen to him” is an echo of Deuteronomy’s “heed the words of the prophet.” It is, I think, significant that both the author of the Deuteronomic prophecy (Moses) and the first apostle to apply it to Christ (Peter) were present at this unprecedented event.

²²Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), 283.

lives should be lived, and he can provide the resources, insights, and strength we need and so much more.

And so, today, God is calling you and me to accept Jesus as our life. We are to trust him for all things. We are to band together as his disciples, learning from him how to live and being formed by God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, into the kinds of people capable of this transformed life. We live under the authority of Christ: learning together, obeying together, suffering together. Gathered as a living community we do not scatter in times of persecution, but are prepared to die for one another and our teacher, Jesus. Jesus is our prophet to teach us, our priest to forgive us, our king to rule us, our friend to walk alongside us. In his transforming power, we wage the peaceable war of the Lamb against evil in all its manifestations: personal, social, institutional. In his joy we walk cheerfully over the earth. His life becomes our life. This is the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

ABSTRACT

The salvation that is in Jesus Christ is a new order of life in the kingdom of God that encompasses all of human existence, both here and hereafter. This life is mediated through the risen Christ, who is the eschatological "prophet like Moses" (Deut 18:15) here to teach his people himself. By means of his life, people are able to experience spiritual transformation into Christlikeness. Living communities of Christ's disciples are formed through his power; learning together, obeying together, and suffering together.