

What Is The Exchanged Life?

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Introduction

Through the years we have been asked the question: What makes your ministry unique to other Christian ministries? The uniqueness of Grace Ministries Denver and other sister ministries of the Association of Exchanged Life Ministries is our emphasis on spiritual truth called the "exchanged life". What is the exchanged life?

From Toiling to Rest

Let's begin by examining the origins of this term. The term 'exchanged life' was coined by the son of Hudson Taylor to describe the spiritual experience of his father. Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission. Many years of labor for Christ resulted in the founding of a major work in China but also resulted in spiritual burn-out in the life of Hudson Taylor.

Speaking about Hudson Taylor, his friend Mr. Judd said, "He had been a toiling, burdened one (Christian) before, with latterly (recently) not much rest of soul. He was a joyous man now, a bright happy Christian. It was resting in Jesus now, and letting Him do the work -- which makes all the difference."

Hudson Taylor's son said, "It was the exchanged life that had come to him -- the life that is indeed, 'No longer I'. Six months earlier he had written, 'I have continually to mourn that I follow at such a distance and learn so slowly to imitate my precious Master'. There was no thought of "imitation" now! It was in blessed reality 'Christ liveth in me'. And how great the difference! Instead of bondage, liberty; instead of failure, quiet victories within; instead of fear and weakness, a restful sense of sufficiency in Another. So great was the deliverance, that from that time onward Mr. Taylor could never do enough to help make this precious secret plain to hungry hearts wherever he might be."

This precious secret discovered by Hudson Taylor was not a new doctrine. It is plainly taught within the Scripture. The reason Hudson Taylor was so late in discovering it and the reason that so many Christians today never discover it is that there is a lack of teaching and emphasis on the exchanged life. Believers are taught that their performance (what they do) is all that matters. While doing is critical, the believer must also understand that Christ lives within and that He is the source of strength and wisdom. Today's Christians are so performance oriented that we never even consider the possibility of allowing Christ to live His life through us -- until the burden of performance causes us to cry out for relief. One famous preacher explained his ministry as preaching law (performance) until people cried out for grace then he gave it to them!

The set of doctrines that relate to the exchanged life are also related to the doctrines known as identification truths, grace truths, and the so called "deeper life" truths. Down through Christian history there have always been some who understood, taught, and experienced the exchanged life truths. By naming the following teachers of the exchanged life truths I am not saying that we should agree with everything they taught. A person can be expert in one truth and miss the mark entirely in another area of life. If perfection is a requirement before we listen to a teacher, I am afraid we will find no person, except Jesus, able to teach us. Who, then, were some of the best known teachers of these truths?

Many today love the work of Oswald Chambers, My Utmost For His Highest. Chambers had, and still has, a major impact in spreading this truth. Other teachers of the past included Watchman Nee, L. E. Maxwell, F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, F. J. Huegel, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Brother Lawrence, Alan Redpath, Ruth Paxton, Hannah Whitehall Smith, A. B. Simpson, A. W. Tozer, C. S. Lewis, and Charles Trumbull, just to name a few. In our generation well known teachers include Charles Solomon, David Needham, Jack Taylor, Neil Anderson, Bill Gillham, Roy Hession, Miles Stanford, Charles Stanley, and Major Ian Thomas.

From Exhaustion to Victory

Certainly this body of truth is not without substantial representation. Nevertheless it is true that less than ten percent of Christians have heard the precious secret that changed Hudson Taylor's life from exhaustion to victory. Many know about the doctrine of the exchanged life, but knowledge is not the same thing as experience. Profession and possession are quite different things. Many people also know the facts about Jesus the Savior, but this is not the same as having received Christ and finding our very life in Him. So it is with these precious truths. Let us now attempt to describe and define the exchanged life and to discover its source in the Scripture.

The Exchanged Life Is: Living In the IN Group

There are many verses that tell us Christ lives IN us through His Holy Spirit, but did you know there are more verses that proclaim we are IN Christ? This exchange of life -- my life in Him, His life in me-- is the foundation of the doctrine of our unity with Christ and is also the basis of the truths called the exchanged life. This spiritual union occurred at the point of our new birth. At that point in time we spiritually died to the life of Adam (Romans 6:6) and were resurrected into a brand new life in Christ.

We see half of this truth presented in Colossians in this way, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:3) The second half of the exchange is seen in Romans, "But you are not IN the flesh but IN the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells IN you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Romans 8:9) And so we learn that we have received an exchange of life.

Christ is in us and we are in Him. Christ came into our lives when we received the Holy Spirit at rebirth. We were placed into Christ when we died. But, you may say, when did we die? We died when Christ died on the Cross nearly 2,000 years ago. This is a spiritual fact even if we cannot easily understand it because we live in time and space. God is not limited to time and space so His thoughts are not our thoughts and our thoughts are not His thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). Spiritual things are eternal and are, therefore, not limited to time and space. Because we cannot grasp a truth with our minds we tend to not believe what the Scripture says.

Can a believer really experience being in Christ or Christ being in them?

Perhaps the most difficult part of this truth, Christ in us and us in Christ, has to do with experience. Can a believer really experience being in Christ or Christ being in them? If being in Christ and Christ in me isn't to be experienced, then what is the importance of trying to understand this truth? Understanding and implementing this truth is the basis of the victorious Christian life. The truth is that God placed us in Christ and it is God that has placed Christ in us. God does things for a reason. For example; it is the life of Christ within that gives the believer the strength and resources to overcome. It is being in Christ that gives the believer the protection and authority needed to defeat the evil one. These are just a few of the results of being in Christ. Christ's life is a life to be experienced. Christ's life was given to the believer for that purpose.

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost For His Highest* explained this new life this way "When I pray - "Lord, show me what sanctification means for me," He will show me. It means being made one with Jesus. Sanctification is not something Jesus Christ puts into me: it is Himself in me (I Corinthians 1:30).

What are most individuals seeking today? Most individuals are not seeking new teaching or a new leader, but a new life. They seek a life that works. This is why it is so crucial to know that Christ's very life is within. Once we discover Christ's life within we begin to search for it -- to see His life manifest in our everyday life. One of the most important jobs of a people helper is to help individuals see Christ

within (see II Corinthians 13:5). Once the believer sees the Lord at work within they often weep. It is such an encouragement!

Let's look at the alternative of Christ in us and us in Christ. If Christ's life isn't IN us then we are to be pitied. His life is real and sets captives free. The alternative to Christ within is Christ without. The believer is without hope. The believer is without power. The believer is without purpose. Christ becomes a leader from without, another dictator with no personal connection. People are not looking for another voice making unrealistic demands. They want LIFE, a life that works. Where does this life originate?

The Exchanged Life Is: Life In And From Another Realm

Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us (translated us in the KJV) into the kingdom of the Son of His love." (Colossians 1:12, 13) Do you see this? We are here (on earth), but we are also there (In the Kingdom of His Son)! In the physical realm we can be subject to darkness, death, and demons, but in the spiritual realm we are already in the kingdom of light, life, and the Lord of love. We are earth walkers and kingdom dwellers simultaneously (Just like Jesus!). To be translated, as the King James Bible says, is to be exchanged. The Greek word methistemi means to transfer, carry away, depose, exchange, remove, translate, or turn away. What has been transferred, carried away, deposed, exchanged, removed, translated, or turned away?

In the spiritual realm we have already transferred or exchanged our earthly citizenship for heavenly citizenship. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19)

It is the earthly reign of God's Kingdom manifested in the life of His subject that distinguishes the believer from just another earthly person. Because our citizenship is in heaven we are to act according to our heritage. Our lives are to be different from those who are not of God's Kingdom. We become His ambassadors to a "crooked and perverse generation" (Philippians 2:15). As ambassadors we say and do what the King desires. We are His representatives. We are not to say what we want to say on our own initiative or do what we want to do on our own initiative. We are to say and do what He wants. Jesus put it this way "as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (John 14:31). That's what it means to be a part of a Kingdom. The King has absolute authority over life and death. His people do His will.

Likewise, His enemies are His people's enemies. This Kingdom truth has two elements. One element is the truth that His resources are available to fight His enemies. His life (and its resources) are in His subjects. Remember the last exchanged life truth Christ in you? This is the practical out working of that truth. The other element is that as His subjects we are protected from the onslaught of His enemies. This is the practical out working of the exchanged life truth of you in Christ. It is so reassuring to know "who wins" in the spiritual battle. Confidence comes from knowing such things. It is not a misplaced confidence like "I can do it!!" It is a confidence based on the One who can do it -- the King of all creation!!! Big battles are nothing to a Big God. If there seems to be too many defeats in your life you may want to consider that perhaps your God is too small. God is bigger than anything you may encounter. Will you believe and trust Him to meet what your circumstances demand? Remember, the battle is the Lord's, He will fight for you.

Let's look at the alternative. If we haven't been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son, then again we are a people to be most pitied. We would have a king but no power. We would have a lord with no ability to obey. We would have to protect ourselves from the onslaught of the evil one. We would have to reach deep into ourselves for resources that are at best limited and weak. Interestingly and sadly, this describes how many believers live. They live a life that is limited to the earthly realm and not the life that God intended and has so richly given.