

A Positive Salvation

John 10:10

Introduction

Christ's salvation takes away. It subtracts. It leaves us with less. And that's good, because Jesus takes away bad things; He removes what damages and destroys us – sin, guilt, condemnation, judgment, hell, eternal death, etc. Who wants to keep those things?

But Christ's salvation is not only negative. It not only takes away, it also adds. It adds acceptance, pardon, joy, peace, and many other graces. Above all, it gives life. And no ordinary life, but as Jesus says in John 10:10, "abundant life."

Now some of you may be saying to yourself, "I don't need life, abundant or otherwise. I'm perfectly happy with my life." Well, I could try to disprove your claim tonight. I could try to persuade you that your life is not as good as you think or claim. I could argue that no matter how good your life may really be, experience suggests that it won't last. I could prove to you that even if it did last as long as this early life, afterwards you will face death.

But I'm not going to do that tonight. Instead I'm going to focus on "A Positive Salvation." I'm going to explain how the Christian life is the abundant life and hope to persuade you that you need it, hope to persuade you to want it and inspire you to seek it. And for those of you who already are Christians, I want to remind you of the life you have, the abundant, the wonderful gift of life that you live.

Why did Jesus come to earth?

There are many, many answers to that question. "To teach people...to help people...to make people better...to feed the hungry...to deliver the poor...to spoil my fun..."

His answer. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

He says, "There are lots of people in this world and they really exist to drain life from you." They are life-suckers, even life-killers. And some of them are religious – the Pharisees of His own day. They are not out for your best interests. They are interested in what they can get from the sheep but not in the sheep themselves. Their minds are focused more on what they can get out of people rather than what they can do and give and be for the sheep. "The thief comes not, but for to steal, and kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

He Gives Abundant Spiritual Life

The Bible says we are dead in trespasses and sins. The spiritual part of our human nature, our soul, is dead, lifeless. It's not just weak; it's dead. It's not just sick; it's dead. It's not just drowning; it's drowned.

It's not floating in the water waiting for somebody to throw a lifebelt; it's face down, with water-filled lungs, and a cold lifeless heart. It doesn't need a lifebelt. It needs a lifeguard and mouth-to-mouth, or spirit-to-spirit resuscitation. And that's what Jesus came to do. "I am come that they might have life." I am the lifeguard, I am the lifebelt, I am the resurrection and the life.

So do we just wait, floating face down for our life-guard? No, with our physical life, our bodily life, we can ask for, seek, and plead for spiritual life.

Jesus did not come just to make sure we knew we were dead in sins. "I am come that they might have life." Sure, knowing our deadness is a starting point, but it's only a starting point. It's not the endpoint.

Jesus did not come to make us deader, to sink us deeper, to kick our corpses. "I am come that they might have life." He came to get us out of death, to raise us higher, to put life in our corpses.

Jesus did not come as the reluctant, hesitant life-giver. "I am come that they might have life." My whole purpose, my ultimate aim, my life's work is life.

Spiritual life is simply that – life...and liveliness in spiritual things.

Spiritual life means spiritual activity like repenting from sin, believing Christ, trusting Christ, loving Christ, choosing the right way for the right reasons and ends.

Spiritual life is a dimension of living that we previously knew nothing about. How much did you know about physical life before you were born? Similarly, you know nothing about spiritual life until you have it. You can hear lots of people preach it and talk about it and yet still know as much about it as you did your own physical life before being born – which is a big NOTHING.

Spiritual life can only be given by Christ. Without His kiss of spiritual life, we will never repent, we will never believe, we will never love God, we will never hope, we will never know anything as we ought to know. We will never worship.

He Gives Abundant Intellectual Life

Many people think that when you become a Christian you park your brain at the door. Many think you can't become a Christian without losing your mind. Christian faith is portrayed as a crutch for the weak, intellectual suicide, a haven for the unthinking. Educators, scientists, philosophers, journalists, etc., look down on Christians with scorn-filled pity. However, as Ligonier's motto makes clear, Christianity is about a renewing of the mind.

However, what they don't realize is that Christian faith is so intellectually satisfying and even thrilling. When we become a Christian a whole field of new intellectual study opens up. So many *new subjects* to learn about – God, the human heart, salvation, atonement, reconciliation, justification, adoption, the person of Christ, the work of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit. Systematic theology, Biblical theology, Practical Theology, Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Apologetics, Ethics. So much to learn that not even the greatest mind could ever get to the end of it even in a thousand years.

We are given a *new mind*. Many Christians will tell you how upon conversion the Lord gave them a new mind, a new way of thinking, a new energy in their thinking, a new ability to think, and reason, ask questions and find answers. The Bible sometimes describes salvation as an enlightening of the mind. That's what it can feel like. We were wandering around in the darkness when God turned the lights on in our mind and we began to think, and understand, and perceive and discern in a whole new way.

Jesus also gives *new glasses* to view and read other subjects. With this new mind soaked in God's Word, the Christian also wants to study God's World. And he sees God's world in a completely new light. She reads books and listens to lessons with a new filter, a new clarity, a new perception. Soccer doesn't look the same, politics doesn't look the same, entertainment doesn't look the same, engineering doesn't look the same, child-rearing doesn't look the same. We think more deeply, more perceptively, more profoundly now. We see what we never saw before, we see from new angles, we see with new insight.

Jesus gives us *new challenges*. Prior to conversion we made decisions based upon self-interest and short-term gain. But now we have to search the Scriptures, prayerfully seek God's help in applying it to our lives.

Jesus gives us a *new framework* that holds it all together. This is often called a worldview. Prior to conversion we knew lots and lots about lots and lots but it didn't hold together, it was a lot of disparate separate information. Now we have a grid, a structure, a way of thinking that sees the relationships between everything and especially the relationship between everything and God.

He Gives Abundant Emotional Life

When people think of Christians, they often think, "Poor people, they don't know how to enjoy themselves." They see us as shriveled humanity who have sadly chosen to live lives of gloom and doom. One-dimensional miseries whose main focus is sin and suffering.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Christ came to give abundant emotional life. He came to purify our emotions, deepen and heighten our emotions, add to our emotions.

Do we sorrow for sin? Yes. Are we pained by evil in the world? Yes. Are we saddened by loved ones choices? Yes. Yes, there are unpleasant feelings in the Christian life.

However, there are also immensely enjoyable emotions too.

There is the *joy* of being a Christian. The joy of being loved with an everlasting love. The joy of love divine, all loves excelling. The joy of forgiveness of sins. The joy of being adopted into the family of God. The joy of hearing God's voice when we read the Bible.

There is *peace*. Peace of a cleansed conscience. Peace in the midst of trouble. Peace in the face of death and judgment. Peace in the face of false accusation, knowing that God knows and God will clear your name. Peace in the midst of financial loss, knowing that the Lord will provide.

There is *confidence*. We all know people who are so disabled by a lack of confidence, a lack that hampers every area of life. We know Christians who lack confidence in their spiritual life too and it hampers their progress. However, it can be very different. Assurance gives boldness in prayer, boldness in preaching, boldness in witnessing, boldness to fight Satan.

And there's *hope*. I can hardly imagine living without hope now. Hope is knowing that the future will be better than the past. Hope is knowing that however long the night, the sun will rise. Hope is knowing that life will get better...if not here, then certainly after death. Hope is knowing that there is life after death and that I have title to that life, my future is secure and certain. This hope is much more than a hope so. It's a hope that powerfully influences my present psyche and attitude.

He Gives Abundant Social Life

Divine friendship. Abraham was called the friend of God. But so is every Christian. Jesus calls us friends, and we can say of Him, "This is my friend." Christ calls us into His family, into the fellowship and friendship of God Himself. We have three infinite and eternal persons to get to know.

One of the joys of friendship is finding out things about your friend you did not know before. That's why early days of friendship are so exciting, so thrilling. But then as you get to know a person, these new revelations reduce and diminish, until eventually after many years, you've exhausted the person's life. There's little or nothing left to know. However, this is never the case with God. He is an infinite and inexhaustible being that we will never get to the end of. There will always be new excitement, the thrill of new discovery.

Deep friendship: God gives love for His people and friendships with them that are deep and loving. Deep spiritual friendships based on deepest truths and deepest shared experiences. There may be things that we do together – vacations, hobbies, etc., - However, our friendship is much deeper, based on things that will endure even when we can't enjoy leisure activities together. How wonderful to have a friend to ask us about the deepest things in our lives: How is your spiritual life? How is your relationship with God? Are you making spiritual progress? How is the fight against sin?

Wide friendship: Across the ages, across the genders, across the races, across the nations, across languages, and cultures. Some of these friendships are counter-cultural and even counter common sense. God brings us to love people we would never normally have chosen to love. Sometimes we end up being best friends with people we previously ignored or even despised. We may have been racist before and we end up loving a race of people that we hated before.

Long friendships: Many of these Christian friendships will be life long. However, like all friendships in this world, they can be ended by death, by distance, or even by the devil when he divides people and alienates them. Christian friendships however will continue into eternity, be revived in eternity, repaired in eternity. Contrast that with hell where there will be no friendship. In fact your best friends will be your tormentors. Imagine that, look in the face of your best friend and consider that if you both die without Christ you will torment each other for all eternity.

Jesus contrasts his life-giving friendship with the life-taking of others. These are not just Pharisees; they are anyone that gets between you and life in Christ. They are stealing from you, killing you and destroying you. The thief takes life but Christ gives it to the full.

He Gives Abundant Physical Life

Although there are many exceptions, in general, Christians live healthier and longer lives. That's God's promise (Exodus 20:12; Prov. 3:7,8). The morality and ethics of the Bible when lived out tend towards health of body and happiness of mind.

But it's at the resurrection when the abundant physicality of this life will be full manifested and enjoyed. What life will course through our whole beings when the perfected soul is reunited with a perfected body.

Some of us reaching middle age, and many of us who have left it look at our children or watch teenagers playing sport and think, “Wow, what I’d give to feel like that again, to run like that again, or even to look like that again.” It seems so effortless, so easy, so energetic. But we know we will never feel or be or look like that again. No...we will actually feel, be, and look even better.

Wishing we could be teenagers again sets the bar too low. We are going to be given bodies that far excel the most Olympian physique: the speed of the sprinter, the agility of the gymnast, the endurance of the marathon runner, the accuracy of the marksman, the strength of the power-lifter, the versatility of the decathlete, the spring of the high-jumper, and the beauty of Miss World or Mr. Universe

He Gives Abundant Eternal Life

Eternal life is not primarily about length of time but quality of time. Yes, it’s life that never ends, but if our focus is on “eternal” or “never ends” then we are missing the point. The point is “life”, abundant life, quality of life.

It means ever increasing, ever renewing, every improving spiritual life, intellectual life, emotional life, social life, and physical life. The life begun here is not brought to a climax when we die, comparatively speaking, it will feel as if we’ve never really lived at all.

Yes, even the Christian who have lived the most abundant life hear below in all these dimensions, will feel as if they were dead while they lived. Such will be the contrast. In these election days, we often hear about so and so got a bump or a bounce in the polls – a noticeable lift in popularity or support from some event or other. Well, if you could graph the Christian life at death, there’s not just a bump or a bounce, the curve goes off the charts, so much so that it will hardly seem as if we had even begin to live.

That’s what our loved ones in glory are experiencing right now – apart from the physical life that awaits the resurrection. When we see life depart, they experience life just beginning. We say, “He’s dead.” He says, “I’ve come to life.” Immediate, immense, and immeasurable life.

He Gives Abundant life

I hope you can now see how abundant this life is? Can you see how positive this salvation is? This is not just surviving. This is thriving.

But this life, this abundant life, this abundant spiritual life, abundant intellectual life, abundant emotional life, abundant social life, abundant physical life, this abundant life that Christ gives has a price.

The price is His life. The price is His death. Three times in this chapter he links life for the sheep with laying down His own life in death (11, 15, 17). Our abundant life was bought by his abundant death. He died the death we deserved. He died that we might live. He abandoned his life that we might have abundant life.

Your response? “You will not come to me that you might have life” (John 5:40). Is that how Jesus looks on you today? Is that Jesus’ verdict upon you? Is this what you will be thinking when you die? “I did not come to Him that I might have life.” Is this the thought that will torment you forever.

This is not a theological explanation; it’s a judicial condemnation. This is not an excuse you can lean on, it’s heaping full responsibility upon you. It’s not a sharing of the blame; it’s piling all the blame on you.

I’ve been involved in a dispute recently and one of my friends said to me, David it’s never 100% wrong on one side and 0% on the other. It’s maybe 50/50. At the most its 93/7. Some of the blame is on both sides and therefore some apology should be made on both sides. He’s right.

But not here. If we die without Christ we won’t turn up at His judgment seat to hear Christ say, well let’s share the blame. What do you say, 50/50? Or maybe 93% on your side and 7% on mine? Or in an extreme case maybe 99% blame on the human side and 1% on Christ’s?

Let me tell you what every unconverted person from this church will hear

“You would not come to me that you might have life.” You are 100% to blame. There is zero percent on Christ’s side.

I am come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly. You will not come to me that you might have life. That’s the blunt truth. What are you going to do about it? Are you comfortable going forward with that state of affairs? Come to Him for a positive salvation. Come to Him for life. Come to Him for abundant life.

A more abundant life that you deserve. A more abundant life than an unbelieving life. A more abundant life than you can ever imagine. A more abundant life than anyone else can promise or give you.