

LIVING DIVINE LIVES

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AC 21:7 We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for a day. ⁸ Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. ⁹ He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

AC 21:10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' "

AC 21:12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

What an interesting phrase, "We gave up and said, "the Lord's will be done." When I read these words I was somewhat amazed by them. Why would Paul's converts and companions want him to avoid the will of the Lord anyway? Was it not unnatural and even unChristian to want Paul to go against the will of the Lord? And yet here were Christians who put Paul's safety above Paul's destiny, who put the Apostles security above the will of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴ When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done." How do we explain such a dissonance in the attitude a Christian should have in such a case? It's really simple when you consider that a Christian has two distinct natures

INDEED, WE MUST FACE THE FACT OF OUR DUAL NATURES AS CHRISTIANS. We have two natures! One of our natures is human; the other nature is Divine. The Apostle Peter tells us this: ^{2PE 1:3} "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." When we were born again by His Spirit we gained a new, a Divine nature. We didn't lose our old nature, we simply gained a "New" nature! Peter reminds the Christians of his day and through him the Holy Spirit reminds us today that the only way we can live this Divine Nature is by faith in the promises of God. Peter calls these promises "very great and precious promises" reminding us that we can only live the Divine Nature by 'standing on these promises'!

Paul speaks to this great truth also in 1 Corinthians.

^{1CO 2:10} but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one

knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. ¹⁴ The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:

1CO 2:16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?"
But we have the mind of Christ."

We will face the fact of our dual natures when we know the meaning of our Rebirth Experience. Jesus spoke about it in John 3: JN 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. "

JN 3:4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

JN 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

JN 3:9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

JN 3:10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

JN 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Jesus clearly tells us that the Divine Life comes from Above, comes from God. He also tells us that the Rebirth Experience comes because He died for our sins and in so doing He released us from sin so that the Divine Life could enter our human bodies and live and prosper within us.

So you see, this conflict of our two natures that is present in Acts 21:14, pretty much defines our lives as Christians. Sometimes our human nature wins the conflict by overcoming our Divine nature, but most often our Divine nature wins the conflict by overcoming our human nature. The true way to live our lives is to live in our Higher nature, in our Divine nature. Christ who was 1st Divine and then human, alone was able to live completely in His Divine nature and die for our sins. We, however, are 1st human, with a Divine nature. This makes us more vulnerable in our human nature in the conflicts between our sinful human nature and our righteous divine nature. The flesh is weak but the Spirit of God is always with us. The Duality is real and we can only experience this when we know what the Rebirth Experience means. We will only be fully released to live life Divinely when our human nature dies, even when our physical body dies.

This is what makes spiritual conflict normal within. Paul cried out in Romans, “For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do.” Spiritual conflict is something we have to live with. Someone said that our main problem as Christians is to starve the ‘old man’ and to nourish the ‘new man.’ One of my favorite songs is The Old Man is Dead. That is true in the larger sense, but for some reason, the Old Man keeps on raising his head and trying to get dominance in our lives. Another favorite song of mine is They Baptized Jesse Taylor in Cedar Creek Last Sunday. One stanza says that the county ‘has a brand new man’. That is true. But every Jesse Taylor also carries about in his being the ‘old man’ as well. Therefore spiritual conflict is indeed normal for all of us who know Christ in the New Birth.

But since Jesus Christ was both ‘fully man and fully God’, we should not dwell on the negative aspects of our Dual Natures, but instead CELEBRATE THEM. We should first of all Celebrate Our Human Nature. Jesus told the story of the two men who went up to the Temple to pray. The sinner beat upon his breast and confessed his sinfulness. The self-righteous man said, “I thank God that I am not as other men...” It is both healthy and good and comforting to know, and to confess, that we are like other men, that we are like other human beings. We have a common humanity, a common human nature. We can celebrate this with all humanity, for as Peter said, “He has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth.” I cannot celebrate my humanity fully without celebrating all mankind. I cannot deny the joy of humanness and dignity to others, and have joy in my own humanness. I can with Whitman celebrate myself and sing myself only if I celebrate others and sing others. God condescended to become human in Christ, and in that condescension lifted humanity to its highest level. The WORD became flesh and tented among us human beings. God’s Arm did not reach down and lift us up; God became man and slept with us, ate with us, and experienced death with us. Let us therefore celebrate our Humanity! When I am in Romania I celebrate with the people there, whether they are Roma people who now comprise 25% of that nation, or the original Romanians who are the rest of the people. I celebrate their songs, I celebrate their culture, I celebrate with them our common humanity. I love them and they respond to love with love and acceptance to me. I weep with them in their sorrow, in their painful broken economy, in their lack of so many things that I take too much for granted. We celebrate together our humanity.

We should also Celebrate our Divine Nature as Sons and Daughters of God. Since we have been Born of Heaven, Born of the Spirit, Born of God, we should celebrate our

New Natures in this world below. This celebration we call Worship. Our lives must be lives of praise and worship toward our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely we come to church to Celebrate, to worship. But the most profound worship we do is to Live Worship. The Bible tells us to ‘rejoice always, pray evermore, in everything give thanks.’ Why? Because God has not only ‘saved’ us, He has bestowed upon us His own Divine Spirit. He has stamped us anew in His Image. We must celebrate our Divine Nature. This celebration is for what we have become. We are God’s Sons and Daughters. We have Paternal Rights to an Eternal home. We have joy unspeakable and full of glory. Jesus has made us Kings and Queens on this earth and so we Celebrate the Royalty that is ours. We Celebrate the Authority that is ours. He has left us with the authority of His Own Name. In His Name all things are possible. In His Name every battle can be won. At the mention of His Name, satan shudders and flees! Celebrate Jesus. Celebrate your ‘new humanity’ in Christ.

When we Celebrate our Humanity and our Divine Nature, we journey with Christ. I cannot imagine a dull moment that was had as Christ and His 12 trudged the hill country of Galilee. One of my favorite poems is The Goodly Fere:
Harriet Monroe, ed. (1860–1936). *The New Poetry: An Anthology*. 1917.

295. Ballad of the Goodly Fere

By Ezra Pound

THE BALLAD OF THE GOODLY FERRE

Simon Zelotes speaketh it some while after the Crucifixion.

HA’ we lost the goodliest fere o’ all
For the priests and the gallows tree?
Aye lover he was of brawny men,
O’ ships and the open sea.

When they came wi’ a host to take Our Man
His smile was good to see,
“First let these go!” quo’ our Goodly Fere,
“Or I’ll see ye damned,” says he.

Aye he sent us out through the crossed high spears
And the scorn of his laugh rang free,
“Why took ye not me when I walked about

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Alone in the town?" says he.

Oh we drank his "Hale" in the good red wine
When we last made company.

No capon priest was the Goodly Fere,
But a man o' men was he.

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I ha' seen him drive a hundred men
Wi' a bundle o' cords swung free,
That they took the high and holy house
For their pawn and treasury.

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They'll no' get him a' in a book, I think,
Though they write it cunningly;
No mouse of the scrolls was the Goodly Fere
But aye loved the open sea.

If they think they ha' snared our Goodly Fere
They are fools to the last degree.
"I'll go to the feast," quo' our Goodly Fere,
"Though I go to the gallows tree."

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"Ye ha' seen me heal the lame and blind,
And wake the dead," says he.

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"Ye shall see one thing to master all:
'Tis how a brave man dies on the tree."

A son of God was the Goodly Fere
That bade us his brothers be.

I ha' seen him cow a thousand men.
I have seen him upon the tree.

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He cried no cry when they drave the nails
And the blood gushed hot and free.
The hounds of the crimson sky gave tongue,
But never a cry cried he.

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I ha' seen him cow a thousand men
On the hills o' Galilee.
They whined as he walked out calm between,
Wi' his eyes like the gray o' the sea.

Like the sea that brooks no voyaging,
With the winds unleashed and free,
Like the sea that he cowed at Genseret
Wi' twey words spoke suddently.

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A master of men was the Goodly Fere,
A mate of the wind and sea.
If they think they ha' slain our Goodly Fere
They are fools eternally.

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I ha' seen him eat o' the honey-comb
Sin' they nailed him to the tree.

Christ was indeed the Master of Men, but He was also the Master of the Universe, the God of the Universe. We are to love and adore Him and follow in His steps. O celebrate with me King Jesus! O celebrate the Lord!

In our celebration we Live Life Divine!

Because we now have Dual Natures, the secret of life resides in THE SURRENDER OF OUR HUMAN NATURES TO GOD.

This is true in The Crisis of Sin and Temptation. Temptation comes at us in 3 directions, according to 1 Jn. 2:16 "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." In our human nature we are tempted through our physical appetites, through our senses, and through our pride. For example, here is a businessman. He is married. He is in another city on a business trip. He meets another woman. They talk. They have a lot in common. At some point he is tempted to deny his vow to his wife, and to have a sinful relationship with this person. The human nature is fighting against the Spiritual nature.

There is conflict. There is crisis. He needs to overcome the temptation to sin, and to do the will of God. He needs to tear himself away from this relationship and to realize that the Divine Life within him is stronger than the temptation outside him. If something sinful does happen, he needs immediately to go to God and to ask for forgiveness; but he is going to have a spoiled relationship with his wife each time he remembers his sin.

The Bible says that “He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world.” If we will just listen in the conflict and hear the voice of God, we will be safe. We must also think of the Word of God and the promises and the commands therein. The best way to overcome satan is the same way Jesus did it—with Scripture. Satan tempted Jesus through physical appetite, through popular acceptance, and through political power, and each time Jesus used the Word and won the day. Know your Bible and you can overcome temptation. You have the Holy Spirit; you also need, in your battle with sin, the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

There is also the Crisis of loss and separation. I, too, like each one you have been greatly grieved by the disaster in Haiti. How can a Good God who has all power allow such suffering. In Christian philosophy this is called a conundrum. We ask this same question when a child dies, or when a friend or family member dies young. We think about the many things they have missed. But basically, I believe, we are mourning the many things we will miss by not having them. We are grieving their death, but our loss. In one of his poems, Al Stewart writes about a neighbor, who died, Amanda Sparkman, I believe.. They built a pine casket for her. In the poem, Al writes that we are really mourning our own mortality when we mourn the death of our loved-ones. There is great truth in that.

Separation and suffering are obviously the hardest things we face in this world, and the hardest things to face in our pilgrimage of faith. Being mortal, however, should show us that we are living in a dangerous world where all sorts of natural disasters not only can happen but do happen—every day. Since human life is so fragile we need more than humanity to face life. We who are Christian are correct—“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever.” If we possess a Divinity from God through Christ, death can only mean Life Eternal, and suffering in this life will make us enjoy the Divine Life with God even more than we can possibly imagine.

There is one other thing I want to touch on in our surrender of our human nature to God: That is the Crisis of Godliness and Sanctification. The fact is that the conflict between our human nature and our Divine nature is made more difficult because we must live the Godlife in the human community. That is to say, the vast, vast, majority of people, both Christians and non-Christians, live their lives only in their human natures; and we must try to live our lives in our Divine natures. It is a great struggle. That is why Paul had such difficulty denying his friends and in saying “Yes!” to God. We have the same difficulty. We are afraid to do the right thing. We fear what others think. Others can hurt us in our human community. But at some point we must have the poise and the power to stand beside Paul and say, “Stop braking my heart. I must do this.” Then, others will respond by saying, “The will of the Lord be done.” Paul could do so because he was standing beside Jesus!

met the Master face to face

I had walked life's way with an easy tread,
Had followed where comfort and pleasures led,
Until one day in a quiet place
I met the Master face to face.

With station and rank and wealth for my goal,
Much thought for my body, but none for my soul,
I had entered to win in life's mad race,
When I met the Master face to face.

I met Him, and knew Him and blushed to see
That His eyes full of sorrow, were fixed on me;
And I faltered and fell at His feet that day,
While my castles melted and vanished away.

Melted and vanished and in their place
Naught else did I see but the Masters face.
And I cried aloud, "Oh, make me meet
To follow the steps of Thy wounded feet."

My thought is now for the souls of men,
I have lost my life to find it again,
E'er since one day in a quite place
I met the Master face to face.