

Present Tense Religion

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The Present Truth : February 1, 1894

“I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2. 20. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith.” 1 John 3.9; 5.4

From these and many other texts that might be cited it is evident that ***the Christian religion is a religion of the present tense. In the Christian life, nothing counts for anything except that which is present.*** Whatever has been in the past is valuable only for its present influence and effect; and the same is true of that which is to come.

To be born of God is to receive our life from Him, just as we receive life through birth from our earthly parents. But the new birth is a continuous process, and thus something that is ever present. It is the life from the Vine coming into us, the branches. John 15.1. Thus it is a continuous flow of life from God into us. “I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit.” John 15.5

If religion were a thing of the past tense, we would be turning our eyes backward instead of forward; and if it belonged to the future tense, we would be always waiting for the appointed time. In either case there would be no growth. This is the great trouble with many who profess to be Christian; they look always either to the past or to the future. If to the past, they measure the possibilities of the Christian life by some past experience; or, having had some genuine experience in the past, they think it could not have been genuine because they afterwards fail; and then they become discouraged. And if to the future, they wait for a time that never comes, since they can only live in the present.

Christianity in the present tense takes a person just where it finds him; and therefore none need wait or be discouraged. The Lord purposes to save men, —all men in the world who will let Him do it—and He cannot do this except by taking them just where there are, and ***just where they are at each succeeding moment of their lives.*** And therefore His purpose is to take you just where you are, not only now, but at each moment which will become “now” as soon as you reach it. If He cannot save men in this way, He cannot save them at all. But He has assured us that He is able to save all, to the very uttermost, that will look unto Him.

And therefore the only thing to do is simply to look to Him now and believe now, without reference to the past failures or future hopes. The only starting point in the Christian life is “now;” the only point attainable is “now.” To live now is not to wish or resolve or anticipate now, but to believe and take. It is looking to Christ now. It is when we forget

to live in the present moment by looking at that moment to Jesus Christ for grace and strength, —by taking Him at the present moment as God’s gift to us—that we fail.