

Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Five Daily Devotions on John 14:6

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Introduction

It is with great delight and humility that I offer these five daily devotions on John 14:6 to you, my dear brothers and sisters at Covenant United Reformed Church of Pantego, NC. Though the occasion for these devotions is difficult, separated as we are by the necessary government response to the COVID-19 (novel Coronavirus) pandemic currently sweeping across our land, we rejoice in God's goodness to us in granting us a situation uniquely suited to reflection, meditation, and repentance. Yes, the Lord is in control, and He indeed "works together all things for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). If all we learn in these days of quarantine and self-isolation is how to wash our hands more effectively, we will have wasted a golden opportunity to draw near to our sovereign and glorious God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for this cause that I have prepared these brief devotions for you.

The aim of this weeklong series of devotions is to direct you to heavenly communion with God the Father through Christ Jesus the Son. This is the supreme aim of our lives: to dwell with God our salvation and defense in His sublime presence, glorifying and enjoying Him for all eternity. In the five devotions which follow, we have two helpers. First, we have the help of one of my favorite Christian pastor-theologians: John Brown of Wamphray (c. 1610-79). It is from his series of sermons on John 14:6 that I have composed these devotions.¹

Our second and more significant helper is the Holy Spirit. Though we may use the words of men to understand more rightly the Word of God, it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit of Christ Himself which guides us in the Way, applies to us the Truth, and gives to us the Life. Thus, it is the Holy Spirit Who shows and applies the Lord Jesus Christ to us. It is my sincere and fervent prayer that while we are deprived of the joy and privilege of corporate worship for a season, we might taste and see something of the goodness of God in meditating on Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

1 ~ Knowing Christ

At all times and in all situations, the Word of God directs us in the proper way of following Jesus Christ, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, the Captain of our souls, and the Head of the church. There are times when believers especially need such direction. It is never more necessary for us to know how to follow Jesus Christ than when we are most susceptible to distraction, that great tool of the world, the flesh, and the Devil to lead us away from the royal road of righteousness, and down one of the many well-worn pathways to destruction.

Beyond any doubt, the culture in which we live is uniquely attuned to all manner of distractions. There is no need to name the many things that pull us away from God. Surely you too can confess that Christ competes against many diversions, responsibilities, sorrows, and carnal delights for your attention and affections. Praise be to God that He does not leave you without encouragement and consolation in this life. This is perhaps nowhere more clearly seen than in John 14, a passage in

¹ John Brown, *Christ: The Way, the Truth, and the Life* (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle, 1839).

which Christ addresses His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me” (v. 1), laying down a sure foundation for spiritual resolve and temerity to support their hearts as they face off against the trials of this present evil age.

In verse 4, Jesus assures His disciples, “And where I go you know, and the way you know.” As their leader, He goes before them. As your leader, He goes before you. Do you know to where He has gone? Do you know the way? If you know Christ, the answer is most emphatically, “yes.” However, if you are confused, you are not so unlike the disciples themselves. Consider the words of Thomas in verse 5, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” Like Thomas and his fellow disciples, we do not always fully realize how much we already know. We need reminders, clarifications, and directions. Jesus provides just all of those things (and more) in verse 6, the theme of this week’s series of devotions:

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

In these words, Christ reminds His disciples of all that He has taught them to this point in the Gospel. Christ clarifies for His disciples the role He plays (and shall play) in leading them into the Father’s very presence. Christ directs them through Himself into that which He all along has promised to them: life with God in righteousness and holiness. How then should you make use of Christ and His words in this verse?

Acknowledge *first* the implicit statement about the human condition which Paul makes explicit in Romans 3:23: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” You were born in sin, alienated from your perfectly holy Creator, whom Christ calls “Father.” But God has made provision for you, and He has provided the way to reconciliation between holy God and sinful man. Confess *second* that Christ alone is the all-sufficient way to the Father, and that He is truth and life in the way. So you must speak of Christ’s being to you all that is needed for you in *this* life on the way to *eternal* life with God the Father, for righteousness and holiness, justification and sanctification, redemption and salvation. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 1:30, Christ “became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” There is no other way but Christ Himself.

Insofar as Christ makes His great statement in verse 6 in response to the disciples’ lack of assurance in verse 5, there are six initial meditations worth dwelling upon:

First, Jesus Christ is very tender in dealing with His followers. He gently passes over many of our failings when He finds that we are not hard-hearted in our confusion and mistakes. He knows our weakness, and “a bruised reed He will not break” (Isaiah 42:3). He is full of mercy, and “He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray” (Hebrews 5:2). By merit of His tenderness and compassion for His followers, all men should choose Him for their leader, receiving and resting upon Him alone for salvation!

Second, when weakness openly and honestly presents itself in the lives of Christians, the Lord does not hide Himself from His children, but rather engages them all the more to help. If we wish to learn, He is quick to instruct. He knows how weak we are, and that if He should deal with us according to our foolishness, we would be crushed. He is not harsh, hasty, rash, and proud, but rather gentle, loving, tender, and full of compassion. It is His purpose as the Incarnate Christ to instruct the ignorant, help the weak, and heal the wounded. Let us then address Him as we would a trustworthy teacher, laying bare our ignorance and confusion, trusting Him to engage us in good faith.

Third, the first step toward further instruction in the things of God is to acknowledge openly your ignorance before Christ. Confess to God your lack of understanding, assurance, and knowledge,

and His Holy Spirit “will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). As the book of Proverbs makes abundantly clear, only the fool hides his ignorance and rejects instruction. The Christian, on the other hand, seeks out the wisdom of God in Christ.

Fourth, Christ takes our ignorant and confused condition as a great opportunity to clarify – and even beautify – the truth more fully and brilliantly than it was before. In John 14, Christ gives the confused disciples teaching that showcases His glorious goodness and power, His victory over sin and death, His consoling love for His people, and how He alone “works together all things for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). He can and will turn your greatest weakness to your greatest advantage. Why would you not bring your failures and shortcomings to Him Who has a proven track record of helping repentant sinners and confused saints forward in the way? He alone is sufficient for these things. Let us go to Him.

Fifth, when Christians come to God in prayer with hidden motives, carnal hopes, and sinful assumptions, Christ is faithful and patient to draw them off of such notions. The disciples were hoping that Christ would lead them in victory against their physical enemies in ancient Palestine. They were looking for a carnal kingdom, and we too fall into the trap of seeking after the things of this world in place of the Kingdom of Heaven. In response, Christ continually redirects us in search of necessary foundational truths, namely those truths that concern the way to the Father. With the truths of communion with the Triune God, Christ feeds and humbles the soul in a lasting manner that uncovers the vanity of worldly pursuits, clarifies other truths contained in Scripture, and protects us against the dangers of spiritual ignorance left unchecked.

Sixth, anyone having any true knowledge of Christ does, according to the measure of their knowledge of Him, both know heaven and the way to it. Some Christians may have real knowledge of Christ, and yet feel as though they are adrift in a sea of confusion and ignorance. However, where there is the least degree of true knowledge of Christ, with love to Him, and a desire to know more of Him, Christ will take notice. He sees not as man sees, which is good news to those of us who are weak in knowledge, and unable to give a clear account of the little knowledge which we do possess. Yet one thing we can say, that He who knows all things, knows that we love Him. Thus, the knowledge of Christ is all. Consider Christ’s words elsewhere in the same conversation with His disciples. “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9b).

You may have many legitimate questions to answer this week as you go about your work, follow the news, and rest from day to day. But let this one thing be your supreme concern: to know the Lord Jesus Christ. For if you neglect to cultivate knowledge of Christ and acquaintance with Him as Savior and Friend, then you will know nothing else as you ought to know it. What follows here is the true test, by which we may make measurement our own progress in knowledge. The true rule to try knowledge by, is not good ideas, clear and distinct expressions, but heart-knowledge of Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

2 ~ The Way

In Hebrews 11:16, we read that men and women of true faith in God are not ultimately concerned with the things of this world, but “desire a better, that is a heavenly country.” They meditate on the Bible promises that refer to being in the presence of God, and they consider the prospect of face-to-face fellowship with their Creator to be of greater value than anything the creation has to offer. When life is difficult or uncomfortable, we do well to cultivate true faith, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1), in our yearning for that heavenly home.

As with any destination, there is a particular route into the presence of the Triune God. The Bible presents to us the way which we are to follow carefully in this life. “By a new and living way,” we are called to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:20, 22).

In John 14:4, Jesus Christ assures His disciples, “And where I go you know, and the way you know.” Throughout His earthly ministry, He had been showing them “the way” to God. As yesterday’s devotion pointed out, Christ not only assured His disciples that they already knew the way, but He also clarified the matter for them in verse 6.

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

What does Christ mean when He says, “I am the way” in this verse? At once, Jesus Christ is both the substance and the means of the gospel of God’s saving grace. He alone makes the ascent into the very presence of God. Through union with Christ alone, sinful men are washed clean of their sins, made holy unto the Lord, and brought into communion with the living God. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). As the prophet Jeremiah confessed, “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself” (Jeremiah 10:23). Nothing man can do can or will make a way for him to the Father, for Christ alone is the way, as excluding all other ways and means.

This one point – that Christ is the way – is the foundation of Christian faith and practice. When sincerely believed and acted upon, this point of doctrine makes clear the manner in which believers are justified through faith in Christ, and subsequently sanctified by His indwelling Holy Spirit. This one point makes clear God’s plan for fitting His church for fellowship with Him in glory. Insofar as Jesus Christ Himself is the way to the Father, believers live by faith in Him, walk in Him, grow up in Him, advance and march forward toward glory in Him.

If we are at all honest with ourselves, we must confess that by nature, we love to wander and even run away from God. Jeremiah was right in complaining of God’s people, “Thus they have loved to wander; they have not restrained their feet” (Jeremiah 14:10). Too often we resemble the wicked men Job described, “Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways’” (Job 21:14). As God Himself laments over His people, “But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me” (Psalm 81:11), so our native desire is not for the knowledge of His way.

Though your innate desire is to ‘have it my way’ – thereby rejecting God’s way – you receive a new God-given desire in the new birth: a desire for Christ, the sovereign and excellent way. Consider these six features of Christ as the way into God’s very presence.

First, this is such a way as can make itself known to the lost traveler. Jesus Christ can and does say to the wandering soul, “This is the way, walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21). No other way can do this. In Christ, there is assurance, comfort, and encouragement.

Second, this way not only makes itself known to the lost traveler, but also brings individuals into it. Christ draws souls unto Himself when they are running headlong in their vain wandering. He moves their hearts to turn into the right way, puts grace in their soul for their salvation, begins resolutions of reformed living in their wills, and sows the seed of faith. Whereas the first feature above is good news to poor, blind, and ignorant wanderers, this second feature is good news to vulnerable sinners that find their heart inclining to wander, loving to go astray into the well-worn pathways of destruction and sin.

Third, this way causes individuals to walk in it. When men are rebellious and obstinate, He can command with authority, for He is given as “a leader and commander for the people” (Isaiah 55:4). How great and comforting should this be to the soul that is weighed down with a stubborn and unpersuadable heart? He, as a king, governor, and commander, can with authority draw or drive, and cause you to follow and run.

Fourth, this way is truth, as well as the way. The soul that once enters into the way is safe forever. There is no possibility of illusion or misdirection. Christ’s promise of access to the Father stands eternally unbroken. The truth of this way is not dependent on those who walk in it, but on the way itself. “A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray” (Isaiah 35:8). God promises, “I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them” (Isaiah 42:16).

Fifth, this way is life, as well as the way. The weary traveler is revived by following it. “He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:29-31). Who would not walk in this way? What could dishearten or strike fear into the man that walks along this way? No other way but Christ Jesus Himself strengthens and refreshes the tired traveler. In fact, Christ breathes persevering life into us when we are as good as dead, and He causes us to march on with fresh strength and vigor.

Sixth, it follows from the five features described above that this way is a most pleasant, encouraging, desirable, and strengthening way. The traveler is safe in the way of Christ Jesus. Such a traveler “shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord” (Psalm 138:5). Speaking of Christ’s wisdom, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Proverbs 3:17). He is a way that is spiritual meat and drink, medicine and nutrients, and all that the poor traveler stands in need of until he makes it to his heavenly home.

Let all the creation of God wonder at the condescending love of God that appointed such a way for us to enter into His blessed presence. Let all the creation of God wonder at the miraculous incarnation of God the Son, He Who was pleased to take on human flesh in order to be this way for all those who trust in Him for salvation. These great and mysterious truths of the gospel are “things which angels desire to look into” (1 Peter 1:12).

Apart from Christ Jesus, two roadblocks stand before you on the path to heaven: first, your unrighteousness and guilt whereby you are legally banished from God’s life-giving presence; and second, your innate wickedness, impurity, corruption, and unholiness, which stand together like a multilayered wall of steel between you and God. Nothing that is defiled by sin can dwell and abide with Him, and nothing that is unclean can enter into His presence. This is why you and I desperately need Christ.

As the way to the Father, Christ is sufficient both for your justification and for your sanctification. Regarding justification, Christ Himself removes your unrighteousness and guilt, whereby you were lying under the death sentence due to those who break the moral law of God. On the basis of His sacrificial death on a Roman cross – and operating through the faith which He Himself bestows upon you by His Spirit – Christ changes your standing before God. Regarding sanctification, Christ Himself cleanses you from all your corruption, renews your soul, and washes away the spots

and stains of sin. Thus, you must receive and rest upon Him for both your justification and your sanctification before God.

Whereas we may learn about Jesus Christ as “the way” through careful reading of the Word of God, grace alone can lodge this truth into our hearts. May the Holy Spirit Himself apply Christ’s words to our hearts, and thereby guide us along the highway of holiness which leads to “a better, that is a heavenly country” promised in Hebrews 11:16.

3 ~ The Truth

Truth seems to be at a premium these days. Spend any time surfing the Internet (and especially social media), and you will learn that fact-checking is absolutely necessary for confirming the truthfulness of much – if not most – of what you come across online. Depending on for what you need to retrieve information, getting a true report can mean the difference between success and failure, fulfillment and disappointment, joy and sorrow, even life and death.

When Jesus Christ comes to His disciples and says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” in John 14:6, the stakes are of the highest order. This is a matter of eternal life and death. But what does it mean to confess that Jesus Christ is the truth? What follows is broken up into two parts: the general meaning of truth indicated by Christ’s claim, and some particulars about Christ as the truth, all which suggest to us how we might make use of this doctrine for our own growth in grace and godliness.

There are four things to note about truth in-general when Christ says “I am the truth.” First, consider what you are without Christ, who is the truth. The Bible testifies that apart from Christ, you are lost in darkness, mistakes, and dangerous errors. “You were once darkness,” Paul says in Ephesians 5:8. John’s Gospel opens with a condemnation of the darkness of the world as being unable to comprehend the eternal Word, the light of men (see John 1:5). John writes elsewhere of the unregenerate man that “he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:11). Peter proclaims to the church that God “called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The Scripture is clear: without the truth of Christ shining on you and into your heart, you will stumble into all manner of wicked and foolish ways. Apart from Christ the truth, all of us are naturally and sinfully inclined to wander out of the way of truth because we have an innate bias toward error.

Second, if Jesus Christ is the way and the truth, then all other proposed ways which we can take or follow to obtain satisfaction in this life are lies, falsehoods, and deceits. There is no truth in any other way but in Christ alone. He only is the truth. He only can satisfy the soul. He only can protect the soul from ruin. He only can lead the soul safely through all obstacles and difficulties in the way. He will neither deceive nor disappoint the soul. Since Christ is the one true way, we must guard against trusting in or resting on anything that is not Christ, the whole Christ, the only Christ, the Christ offered to us in the gospel. Consider the powerful testimony of Scottish minister David Dickson (1583-1662), who said on his deathbed, “I have taken all my good deeds, and all my bad deeds, and cast them in a heap before the Lord, and fled from both to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him I have sweet peace.”

Third, Jesus Christ is the truth both in Himself and in relation to us. He is the truth both objectively and subjectively. Christ is the truth insofar as He is God, equal with the Father and the Spirit (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5; Psalm 146:6), and He is the truth insofar as He is our Savior and the Mediator between God and man (John 1:14). In the Gospel of John, the herald of the Messiah proclaimed of Jesus Christ, “For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for

God does not give the Spirit by measure” (John 3:34), the Spirit here in this verse being the same “Spirit of truth” in John 16:13.

Fourth, Jesus Christ is not merely true or truth, but *the* truth in the same sense that He is *the* way and *the* life. Being not only true, but *the* truth in the abstract, several important things must be said about Him. As already mentioned in the last paragraph, He is truth in all His relations, as God and as man. All truth necessary for our salvation is to be found in Him. Everything about Him – His nature, mighty deeds, words, and works – is utterly true. He is pure and unmixed truth, without any error at all. Truth in Him is perfect and most excellent truth. Though truth be tainted with some error or ignorance in the truest of mere men, in Christ the truth is whole and entire.

There are twelve particular respects in which Jesus Christ is the truth, each of which are worthy of fuller treatment than what is possible in this short devotion. Nonetheless, they are listed below, along with some relevant Scripture citations provided.

First, He is the truth in opposition to the shadows and types of Him contained in the ceremonial law of the Old Testament. “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). As Paul commanded the church in Colossae, “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17). All such shadow and types pointed to Christ, and they directed Old Covenant believers to look to and rest on Him. The whole ceremonial law comes to an end upon the completion of Christ’s all-sufficient work of redemption. All that the ceremonial law was intended to accomplish is fulfilled in Christ (see the Epistle to the Hebrews).

Second, He is the truth in reference to the prophecies of the Old Testament. Whatever was foretold in these prophecies is perfectly fulfilled in Him, or done by Him, or shall in due time be brought to pass by Him at His glorious return (1 Peter 1:10-12).

Third, He is the truth in reference to His completion of all that was agreed upon in the glorious covenant of redemption between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in eternity past. Whatever the Father laid upon Him to do, that He did fully and faithfully. The Father was well-pleased with Him (Matthew 3:17, 12:18, 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) precisely because He was truly finishing all which He was tasked to do (John 17:4, 19:30).

Fourth, He is the truth in respect of His offices which He took upon Him for our good. As prophet, priest, and king, He is altogether true, bringing all His work to a perfect completion in due time.

Fifth, He is the truth in that He fully answers all the titles and names which He has received. Being Jesus, He saved His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Being Christ, He was anointed with the Spirit without measure (John 3:34; Psalm 45:7). Being Immanuel, He indeed is “God with us,” having two distinct natures (God and man) in one Person forever (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). He is likewise Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He is the Lord our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6), “who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Sixth, He is the truth in reference to the promises of God which all center in and lead to Him as the great promise, are all founded upon Him as the only Mediator of the Covenant of Grace, are all confirmed by Him (2 Corinthians 1:20), and are all given out by Him. “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14).

Seventh, He is the truth in that He fully answers all the hopes and expectations of His people (Psalms 17:15, 36:8, 43:5, 45:4). One sight of His glory will fully satisfy His people, and cause them to cry out, “Enough!”

Eighth, He is the truth in opposition to all other ways of salvation, for there is no salvation by works, either of the Law of Moses apart from Christ (Romans 9:31-32; 10:3) or of the invention of men. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Ninth, He is the truth in respect of His leading and guiding His people in the truth. Thus, Nicodemus testified that He was “a teacher come from God” (John 3:2). By His personal teaching, by the apostles and evangelists, by His enduring Word, by His sure ordinances, by His indwelling Spirit, and by His works of providence down to the present, He is the true teacher and guide of His people.

Tenth, He is the truth in respect of His bearing witness to the truth in His words (John 3:11, 18:37), His lawfully ordained ministers, His glorified martyrs who seal the truth in their blood (Revelation 2:13), and by His Spirit who seals the truth of grace on our hearts (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Eleventh, He is the truth in respect of the fact that He promises to accept anyone who comes to Him with a sincere and true desire to know Him and be saved. He gives encouragement to all sinners to come, and to be content to forsake their sins; in so doing, He rejects none who would come. “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). Jesus Christ truly promises, “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). When you called upon His Name, did you find Him unwilling to save, to justify, to adopt, to sanctify, to welcome you into communion with God?

Twelfth and finally, He is the truth in that in all He does, He is true and upright. All His offers, all His promises, and all of His gifts are done and dispensed in the truth and uprightness of perfect love. He is the truth, and unchangeably so. Whatever your situation in this life seems to say to you, you may rest assured that Jesus Christ being the truth shall be to you whatever His Word describes Him to be, and that constantly and unchangeably.

4 ~ The Life

In yesterday’s devotion, we considered the stakes of Christ’s statement to His disciples in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” As noted yesterday, the veracity of Christ’s claim is a matter of eternal life and death. It is only appropriate that He pairs truth with life in His words to the disciples.

Not only is Christ the single way to God the Father, but He is the true and living way. Not only is He the truth of God, but He is the way of truth and the living truth. Today, we will consider the significance of His claim to be the life. He is the life of God, and true life. Everywhere the Bible speaks of life with God, it is referring to Christ Jesus our Lord. This devotional is divided into two parts: what it means that Jesus Christ is the life, and what relevance this has for our Christian experience.

There are things to observe about Jesus Christ’s exclusive claim to be the life. First, Christ’s statement presupposes the nature of men apart from him. Without Christ, all of us by nature are dead, standing in need of rebirth and life, both legally and actually. Legally, we are under a divine death

sentence as a result of Adam's transgression (Romans 5:15) and the resultant corruption of heart that affects our thought, speech, and behavior. Actually, the sentence of the law is executed in part, and we see this both in our bodies and in our souls. Our bodies are subject to corruption and death (1 Corinthians 15:42). Our souls have been cast out of the life-giving presence of God (Genesis 3:24-25), we are "by nature children of wrath...dead in trespasses" (Ephesians 2:2, 5), and we have been ensnared by the devil himself, "having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26) unto eternal death. From these and many other verses of holy Scripture, we see that apart from Christ, we all are under the power of darkness in the understanding, rebelliousness in the will, disorder and perversity in the affections, and unfit for life with God (Romans 3:10-20, 8:7-8).

Consider the terror of that hangs over those who are yet in 'the state of nature' described above. Separated from the life of God, they do not know what they are missing. They do not believe it, they do not feel it, they do not see it. They cannot lament over the reign of death in their lives, nor be humbled to seek for life while it may yet be found. A dead man cannot call a physician, and neither can an unregenerate man call upon Christ in faith.

It should shatter any heart of stone to think how people that are in such a condition are so unwilling to come out of it. How unwilling are they even once to suspect their condition, or to suppose that it may be bad, and that they may be sentence to an eternity apart from the goodness of God? How unwilling are they to sit down to try and examine their situation, and to compare their case to God's Word, which is itself sufficient to lead them to salvation? How unwilling are they even to hear anything that may awaken them to the urgency of their condition? How quick are they to stifle the challenges presented by their conscience as it tries to alarm their soul to the encroachment of an eternity of death? How earnestly do they oppose any presentation of the gospel or true worship of God? How virulently do they hate ministers and preachers of the gospel who might otherwise shake them out of their complacency and set them on the way of salvation, which is Jesus Christ Himself?

Second, we learn from Christ that apart from Him, there is no delivery out of our natural state of death. Neither men nor angels can save us from death. As the Psalmist testifies, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of their souls is costly" (Psalm 49:7-8). We certainly cannot save ourselves! Our good works apart from faith in Christ serve only to condemn us. Paul writes, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Be sure to renounce all other imaginary ways and means of achieving eternal life. Besides Jesus Christ, "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), there is only vanity and death.

Third, we learn that in Christ Jesus, there is delivery out of our natural state of death. Whereas the previous point was negative and an urgent warning, this point is positive and a cause for celebration. Christ alone is the life, and the life that is in Him is divinely sufficient, excellent, and altogether lovely. Christ twice said of Himself, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, 48). It is Christ who says to John, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning, and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts" (Revelation 21:6). He is called "the tree of life" (Revelation 22:2, 14). Peter called Him "the Prince of life whom God raised from the dead" (Acts 3:15), Paul called Him "Christ who is our life" (Colossians 3:4), and John called Him "the Word of life – the life [itself]" (1 John 1:1-2).

As He is an all-sufficient and perfect life – the very life of God – He is able in every way to help us and to deliver us from all aspects of death. He delivers from the sentence of the law (Romans 5:17-18). "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He takes away the curse and sting of death (1

Corinthians 15:56-57), and He has destroyed “him who had the power of death, that is the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). He reconciles men to God (2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 2:16), and so “He Himself is our peace...in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him” (Ephesians 2:14; 3:12). He delivers the adopted children of God from the power of sin and corruption (Romans 7:24-25), including the curses of spiritual blindness and hardness of heart. For He is the “light of the world” (John 8:12). In His death and resurrection He won for us the new birth (1 Peter 1:3) and a new heart of flesh to replace our hearts of stone (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26). Thus, He delivers His own from the pains of eternal hellfire, having satisfied God’s perfect justice and brought life and immortality to light. He “will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

What relevance does this have for our Christian experience? First, recall that Christ spoke these words to His disciples, a fact which indicates that even believers need Christ to be life to them. Daily experience confirms this to be the case. In our weakness, we often fall before temptation, and especially the temptation to go about religious duties in a perfunctory (that is, a spiritually lifeless) manner. We are frequently opposed by the world, the flesh, and the devil, and driven into discouragement when we pursue the life of God. When we become weary in the fight against sin, we need Christ to renew our life and strength (Isaiah 40:31). When we cannot sense God’s favor in saving us and calling us His children, we need the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit and the reminders of Christ’s life-giving Word, “lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

You must not find it strange or surprising that such spiritual troubles would crash against you in the course of your Christian experience. Neither should you conclude in such moments that all of your former pleasant experience of Christ was illusory or artificial. Rather, observe the wisdom, faithfulness, and power of God in bringing you through the dangers and toils which are common in this life. Extol His goodness in keeping you humble, watchful, diligent, and steadfast in dependence on Him who is and must be your life from beginning to end. In difficult times, learn the necessity of living always near to Christ your life, and depending constantly upon Him by faith. For He is your life, and you cannot safely be apart from Him.

There is in Jesus Christ a rich supply of good things that revive, encourage, strengthen, and enliven a soul under spiritual deadness and toil. Therefore He is called the life, having in Him all that which is necessary for and applicable to souls under spiritual sicknesses, confusions, sorrows, weariness, and desperation. The fulness of life which He possesses and gives is fully suited to your spiritual condition in all points. With David in the Psalms, we say to Christ our Savior, “For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light” (Psalm 36:9). It is Christ the life “Who keeps our soul among the living” (Psalm 66:9). It is Christ the Lord who upon the mountains of Zion “commanded the blessing – life forevermore” (Psalm 133:3).

5 ~ The Doctrine of Living to the Father through the Son by the Spirit

Our yearly calendars bear the marks of certain regular rhythms. Whether our time is spent primarily in work, in school, or in recreational activities, certain milestones punctuate our lives like signposts along the way. The ballplayer engages in spring training leading up to opening day. The farmer prepares his land, selects and sows seed, irrigates the ground, and fertilizes his crops in hopes that the ground will yield forth a bountiful harvest to reward his work. The student reads literature, prepares reports, memorizes historical dates and mathematical formulae, and takes all kinds of tiresome exams in order to graduate from school. To come to opening day, bring in the harvest, or walk at graduation, we must use the right means. By way of analogy, we can relate this to coming to God the Father. In this supremely important aim of life, there is but one effectual means: by God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of John 14:6, Jesus Christ clarified the truth that He had been teaching His disciples for years. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” As if to provide further confirmation of what He is teaching them, He adds, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Taken together with His instruction on the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ’s statement in the second half of John 14:6 summarizes what Reformed theologians call “true theology.”

True theology is the doctrine of living to God the Father, through God the Son, by God the Spirit, according to His Word. This is the theology that Christ imparted to His disciples on the night leading up to His betrayal. This is the body of truth that gives life to our souls. The remainder of this devotional will explore Christ’s statement and how we are to make use of Him as we approach the Father in prayer and other acts of devotion.

First, it is absolutely necessary to be clear on this fundamental point of coming to God the Father only in and through Christ the Son. This truth is the very marrow of the gospel and the hinge upon which the door of your salvation swings. Christ Himself is “the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20; Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts: 4:11; 1 Peter 2:6-7) of our faith, by His words we live (Isaiah 38:16), and in Him we “are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation” (1 Peter 1:5). In Christ’s words lies the only ground of all our solid and true peace and comfort. A mistake on this point is most dangerous, and Satan has led men astray into all manner of heresies, errors, and false opinions by suppressing the publication of this truth. In our own hearts according to our darkened understandings apart from Christ, we prefer any proposed way but this one, and so it is necessary for Christ to confirm it to us in such plain language. As becomes more and more clear with each subsequent generation, men have invented a multitude of false ways, making it all the more necessary for Christ to stake His claim as the exclusive Mediator between God and man.

Second, the great difficulty of persuading men to believe and practice the truth that through Christ alone do we have access to the Father warrants Christ’s pressing the matter upon His disciples. A consideration of nature cannot teach the exclusivity of Christ, for it is far above nature. Our natural inclinations oppose the exclusivity of Christ, and fight against it. Christ’s claim offends our pride and that high esteem we naturally have of ourselves. Therefore, Christ’s claim is the first lesson of self-denial for all who would follow Him into the presence of God. All of our pride, our manifold fears, and the discreet temptations we face in this life are at once silenced under the challenging consolation that no one comes to the Father except through the Son who is freely given to us in the gospel.

Third, even veteran believers have need to be reminded of the truth that no one comes to the Father except by Christ Jesus. Satan is ever at work to pull you off of the sure footing of the teachings of Christ the rock (Matthew 7:24). The old “wretched man” (Romans 7:24) is yet in you opposing Christ, and this evil tendency is active in drawing you away from Him. Our own experience gives a record that when we are at our best, it takes great effort to keep our hearts resting on Christ. Is it not the case that we are so prone to slip into formality in our devotion to Him? All too frequently, we read our Bibles, pray to God, sit under preaching, and even participate in the Lord’s Supper as if we are checking items off of some checklist. This must not be. We are certainly called to diligence in attending upon the means of grace which God has given to us, but we must not rest on our own strength. We must rest on Christ alone to dispense His grace as through Him we approach the Father. “Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord; let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven” (Lamentations 3:40-41).

Fourth, if we come to the Father only through Christ, then we have a strong motive to make full use of Christ. Elsewhere He says, I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will

go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9). To enter into eternal life, you must make use of the one gate, the one access point, the one and only Savior of sinners – Jesus Christ our Lord.

Fifth, if Christ alone leads men to life with God, how urgent must be our outreach and evangelism? Brothers and sisters, we have the message of salvation in our possession – let us go out and tell all the world, that many would crowd into the narrow path of salvation! As Paul has reminded us, “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him” (Romans 10:12). Therefore, let us put Christ in all His splendor, beauty, grace, and exclusivity before men, that many would call upon His Name.

Sixth, in and through Christ alone we come to the knowledge of the Father. Christ says, “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22). In and through Christ alone we come to the favor and friendship of the Father (John 15:15; James 2:23), for He alone “is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14), and in Him alone is the Father well-pleased (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11). In and through Christ alone we enter the kingdom of the Father here (Matthew 7:13), and by His Spirit alone we are effectually called (Romans 8:30). In and through Christ alone we enter the kingdom of the Father above, for He alone has opened that door (Matthew 27:51), and He alone has entered into the holy of holies as our forerunner (Hebrews 6:20, 10:19) to prepare a place for us (John 14:3). In and through Christ alone must we address ourselves to the Father in our prayers of supplication (John 16:23), thanksgiving (Romans 1:8; Colossians 3:17), and praise (Hebrews 13:15; Ephesians 3:21). In and through Christ alone do we “have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Ephesians 2:18).

In our prayers and other acts of devotions, we make use of Christ in approaching the Father when we must recognize at least two facts of our existence at all times. First, we must apprehend the reality of our condition before God. We are infinitely separated from the Father, as He is our great God, and we are but finite creatures. Not only this, but He is perfectly holy, and we are stained by sin and the curse of our transgressions. Second and just as important, Jesus Christ is our great peacemaker. Through His death and righteousness, He has satisfied divine justice and reconciled us to God. In and through Him, we may look on God now no more as an enemy and judge, but as our Father who loved us to the point of giving “His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Therefore, let us grip Christ by faith when we pray, for He is our master-usher to bring us by the hand into the presence of the Father. What wondrous love is this? Life with God through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen