

THE ROYAL LIFE

"They which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."
Romans 5:17.

A distressed person recently said, "I just don't have what it takes to cope with life." By her own confession, she was not reigning in life. The royal quality of victory was not there.

That woman is representative of multitudes. They are caught in the toils. They are tangled in their relationships. Either consciously or unconsciously they are oppressed with guilt. They are turbulent in their emotions. They are filled with fears. They are bound by crippling habits. They are mastered by circumstances. Instead of their reigning in life, some one or other of life's evil forces is reigning over them. The record they are making is not royal, kingly, or triumphant; it is shabby, beggarly, and broken.

Has the gospel of Christ a sure word to speak to such persons as these? According to the Apostle Paul, that princely interpreter of the gospel, the answer is a resounding Yes: "They which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." If that isn't a tonic message for troubled people, then I do not know what to call it.

Mind you, they shall "reign in life" -- here and now. Not in heaven's glory, not in some far-off "sweet bye and bye," but here while we still breathe the air of our mortal and demanding world! Here, amid the din of earth's traffic, amid the pulls and tensions of life's sins and sorrows, amid the taint of evil and the seduction of temptation, Christ offers us a royal experience of victorious fellowship with Himself. Let us look at this text.

I. The royal life is the one that reigns.

The sign and proof of Christian royalty is undefeated living. "Reign" is a word that speaks of kingship. It is also a word that speaks of conquest. The two go together.

In this fifth chapter of Romans Paul uses the term "reign" in four distinct ways.

1. The reign of death.

"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come." vs. 14. Death, like some black-robed emperor, has established his grim sway over every island and continent. "Death passed upon all men," Paul declared in verse twelve. But the reign of death needs to be accounted for. There must be something behind it. And there is .

2. The reign of sin.

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Verse 21.

To start with, there was Adam's sin, and then came the spreading corruption and practice of sin everywhere among the sons and daughters of men! "Sin hath reigned unto death."

3. The reign of grace.

"Even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Verse 21.

Grace is a glowing word that pours from his heart as he reaches the climax of this section. If you want to know what is meant by grace, look at Jesus of Nazareth. More especially, look at Him dying on the cross. It was the Innocent suffering for the guilty. It was the Holy One passionately bent on the redemption of the unholy. Looking at the cross, you see that grace is the love and holiness of God, blended together, reaching out to sinful men -- and that means all men -- offering them a free pardon for their guilt and a full cleansing from their defilement. As Maclaren puts it tersely: "The love of God in exercise to sinful men -- that is what the New Testament means by grace."

4. The reign of the believer.

"They which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Verse 17.

In the light of all this, no life can be called royal -- really fine and noble and kingly in the Christian sense -- unless it is a life not of defeat but of victory. Let us put it straight to ourselves before we go any further with this discussion: Am I living, now, where victory is mine right across the board of my life? Victory over known sin -- is that mine? Victory over appetite and passion? Victory over jealousy and resentment? Victory over fears? Victory over circumstances? Yes, quietly and tenderly let me add: Victory over nerves?

You may say, "That is too much to expect." No, not if you believe Paul's message. Dr. F. B. Meyer was not exaggerating when he declared: "There is a life to be lived in the common round and the daily task, so royal, so radiant, so blessed, that those who live it may be said to reign in life." The life that is royal is the life that reigns.

II. The royal life is the one that is rightly related to Christ.

It is fair to ask any person, "How do you stand related to Jesus Christ? Is your faith in Him as the Giver of righteousness? Or is it in yourself and in your self-righteousness? Are you in Christ -- alive and assured? Or are you out of Christ -- self-satisfied and dead to the claims of Him Who gave His life for you?"

Furthermore, it is fair to ask the Christian: "How do you look upon, and how do you treat, your relationship to Christ?" You have confessed Him as your forgiving Saviour, but have you crowned Him as your sanctifying Lord? Have you claimed your full throne rights, in Him and with Him, for a life of freedom from sin and authority over Satan?

Two things are involved in the believer's reigning life "by" or "Through" Christ Jesus.

1. You cannot reign until you have been brought into the Royal Family.

According to the Bible there are two families -- the Rebel and the Royal. We were born into the Rebel Family, "in Adam." We were "born again" into the Royal Family, "in Christ." This, in a very real sense, entitles us to live the victorious life.

2. You must acknowledge the absolute Lordship of Christ in the total sphere of your personality and experience.

If we are to reign in life, Christ must reign undisputedly within us. Struggling, half-defeated, perhaps more than half-discouraged Christian, get a vision of yourself as already seated with Christ on the throne of spiritual power and dominion. Stop saying, "I am so weak." All that Christ is He is for you. All that Christ has He has for you. Affirm it. Announce it. Possess it. It is yours!

There is something better than singing, "I need Thee, O I need Thee," and that is to sing, "I have Thee, O I have Thee." Thou art my power. Thou art my patience. Thou art my love. Thou art my courage. Thou art my all and all. The life that reigns is the life that is rightly related to Jesus Christ.

III. The royal life is the one that is rich in resources.

When Paul speaks of the "abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness," he uses a double expression that emphasizes the magnitude and glory of what we have in Christ. The phrase, "the gift of righteousness," or "the free gift of righteousness," suggests that Christ is an undeserved Saviour, while the phrase, "the abundance of grace," suggests that He is our unsparing Saviour. Whatever we need for conquering and Christlike living, that He will bestow upon us. The resources of the Christian life are just -- Jesus Christ.

Dr. Charles G. Trumbull wrote a pamphlet entitled, "The Life That Wins." With such care and candor he described the defeats, the fluctuations, the disappointments that marked the first years of his Christian life. There was the lack of constancy in his fellowship with God, the lack of victory at times over certain besetting sins, the lack of power in giving his personal witness for the Master. Then he tells of hearing a message entitled, "The Resources of the Christian Life." It was given by a man of God whose writings had already helped him greatly. The opening words of the sermon contained the gist of the whole matter: "The resources of the Christian life, my friends, are just -- Jesus Christ." Gradually it began to dawn upon Trumbull that what he was looking for was already his -- unrecognized and unused.

Let us note what Trumbull said in his own words: "I had known that Christ was my Saviour; but I had looked Him as an external Saviour, one who did a saving work for me from outside, as it were ... But now I knew something better than that. At last I realized that Jesus Christ was actually and literally within me; and even more than that: that He had constituted Himself my very life, taking me into union with Himself -- my body, mind, and spirit -- while I still had my identity and free will and full moral responsibility. Was not this better than having Him as a helper, or even than having Him as an external Saviour? It meant that I need never again ask Him to help me as though He were one and I another; but rather simply to do His work, His will, in me, and with me, and through me. My body was His, my mind His, my will His, my spirit His ... What He asked me to recognize was, 'I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me!'"

Toward the end he adds: "The three great lacks or needs of which I spoke at the opening have been miraculously met.

1. There has been a fellowship with God utterly differing from and infinitely better than anything I had ever known in all my life before.
2. There has been an utterly new kind of victory, victory-by-freedom, over certain besetting sins.
3. And, lastly, the spiritual results in service have given me such a sharing of the joy of heaven as I never knew was possible on earth."

There are multitudes of Christians who have found for themselves that the life that is rightly related to Christ is rich -- immeasurably rich -- in resources.

IV. The royal life is the one that is receptive in spirit.

Put a circle around this word "receive." "They which receive abundance of grace .. shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

Many need to make a clean break with the past and a clean start with Jesus Christ. You,

who are unsaved, need a pardon that only a loving Saviour can bestow. You long for a life that only the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, can impart. Can you ever deserve these blessings? Never! You can only receive them. Yes, with humble, believing boldness receive them! That is faith.

Not to receive grace at all means a doomed life; not to receive "abundance" of grace means for the Christian, a damaged life. If you have not received, check up on yourself. If may be because you have not clearly see, through the Word of God, what measures and magnitudes of grace there are for you. Or, it may be because your hands are holding some things of which they need to be emptied before you can take the promised power and victory of Christ. That grudge! That unholy association! That unconsecrated ambition! That Christ-dishonoring habit!

You say you can't break the habit. You may be right. But are you willing to have it broken? If that crucial question is answered favorably, then again "faith" is the victory. To a brother in Christ one man complained, "I try and try to stop, and I can't. The brother replied, "You have been doing a three-fingered job, and that is not enough." Holding up his hand, he counted off the first three fingers -- t-r-y. He then went on to say that the defeated man needed to use his whole hand to grip Christ for deliverance. So he suggested a five-letter word in place of t-r-y. The word he gave was t-r-u-s-t, a letter for each finger. The man saw the difference, went away with a new confidence, and later returned to announce: "It works; I have victory." In the fullest sense the life that is royal had become his. Has it become yours?

"In full and glad surrender
I give myself to Thee,
Thine utterly and only,
And evermore to be.

O Son of God who lov'st me,
I will be Thine alone;
And all I have, and all I am,
Shall henceforth be Thine own.

Reign over me, Lord Jesus!
O make my heart Thy throne!
It shall be Thine, dear Saviour,
It shall be Thine alone.

Oh! come, and reign, Lord Jesus,
Rule over everything!
And keep me always loyal,
And true to Thee, my King!"