

The Divine Exchange

“Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.” Isaiah 40:31

The heart of the New Covenant is the divine exchange God provided for us by the crucifixion of His only Son, Jesus Christ. The Book of Isaiah is sometimes called the gospel of the Old Covenant because it prophetically heralds Christ’s coming and sacrificial death on our behalf. This is why Isaiah is the most quoted Old Testament prophet in the New Testament. In the verse above, Isaiah prophetically and poetically portrays Christ’s divine exchange. The Hebrew word for wait is *qavah* whose root meaning is “braided together” and the Hebrew word for renew is *chalaph* whose root meaning is “exchange.” In other words, those who are spiritually braided together with the Lord will have their natural strength exchanged for God’s strength. The prophet Ezekiel also foretold of this divine exchange of the New Covenant when he declared God would replace our old sin-hardened heart with His new spiritual heart (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

After His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus Christ personally revealed this divine exchange to the apostle Paul (Galatians 1:11-16; 2:20). As a result, this was the gospel Paul proclaimed: “God made Christ who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). What exactly is this divine exchange? By His death on the cross, Christ exchanged our unholy nature with His holy nature and reconciled us to God (Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Colossians 1:21-22; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 5:11-12). Thus by the sacrifice of His Son, God translated us from our Adamic sinful nature into Christ’s divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Therefore, when we receive Jesus as our Lord and are born again by God’s Spirit (John 3:3-8); our sinful nature is crucified and removed (Romans 6:6; Colossians 2:11) and we become a

new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). The Son of God now lives in us (Romans 8:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9; 13:5; Galatians 1:16; 2:20; and Colossians 1:27).

Therefore, the Christian life isn’t a changed life; it’s an exchanged life. There is a great difference. If my old car is in need of repair, I could change its carburetor. If it breaks down again, I could try changing its transmission. If it fails again, I could keep changing more parts and hope it will work. Or, I could decide my old car is beyond repair and exchange it for a brand new car. This is similar to the divine exchange God accomplished in us. He knew our old man was beyond repair and our sinful nature could not be changed, fixed or improved. Therefore God completely disposed of our old sin nature and exchanged it for Christ’s divine nature. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).”

The divine exchange is like a spiritual grafting. We were once unholy branches but now we have been grafted into Christ - God’s holy root (Romans 11:16-21). Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing (John 15:5).” When we know we have been united with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:5), we can cease from our works and enter into His spiritual rest (Hebrews 4:10). If we abide in the power of Christ’s crucifixion, then the power of His resurrection life will certainly abide in us. Since we no longer live but Christ now lives in us (Galatians 2:20), we can trust Christ to bear His fruit in us (Romans 7:4).

Hudson Taylor, pioneer missionary to China, wrote of this divine exchange, “The Lord Jesus tells me I am a branch. I am part of Him and I have just to believe and act upon it. I have seen it long enough in the Bible but I believe it now as a living reality. In a word, ‘whereas once I was blind, now I see.’ I am dead and buried with Christ - aye, and risen too and ascended; and now Christ lives in me. I now believe I am dead to sin.

God reckons me so and tells me to reckon myself so. Oh, the joy of seeing this truth: I pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ.”

The divine exchange is like a spiritual heart transplant. When Jesus died on the cross, God exchanged our terminally sin-sick heart with His Son’s divine heart and saved us from the power of sin and certain doom. Of course, Jesus had to willingly die for us so we could receive this transplant. Thus God included us in His Son’s death so that His resurrected Son might live in us. The Bible also describes this divine surgery in terms of spiritual circumcision. “In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the sinful nature by the circumcision of Christ... When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ (Colossians 2:11-13).”

Another Scripture that sums up this divine transaction is, “For you have died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). Our new life is hidden with Christ because the divine operation that was done as a result of Christ’s death on the cross was spiritual not physical. In other words, Christ’s divine exchange occurred in our spirit not our body. Since it was spiritual, it is invisible to the human eye. Although a miraculous, inward transformation has taken place in our spirit, who we are in Christ is not yet fully visible. “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will be revealed with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4).” This is the power of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I now live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Galatians 2:20

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