

The Rest of the Gospel

Chapter 17 - The Holy *But*

Dan Stone and Greg Smith

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People always live after the *but*. The word, I mean: *but*. Go out and listen to people talk. Everyone lives after the *but*, whether they are Christians or not. I don't care what they say first, before the *but*. It's after the *but* that you hear what they really believe.

"Sam is a nice guy. We're lucky to have him as a pastor. *But...*"

Now we're going to hear what they really think about Sam.

"*But* he talks too much."

"*But* his sermons are a bit dry."

"*But* my Momma was sick and he never visited."

You're always living after the *but*. Unfortunately, Christians typically put the wrong things before and after the *but*. We say thing like:

"Well, I know God loves me, *but* it doesn't seem like it. Everything is falling apart."

"I know God is my sufficiency, *but* I don't really have what I need."

"I know that God promised me wisdom, *but* all I have is confusion."

You do that, and where are you living? You're living in the junk. You're living in the circumstance. It's got you. The only thing you can hope for is a change in the circumstance. And if that doesn't come, you're up a creek. But even if it does, you still haven't learned to live out of the life of God within you. Satan doesn't care how much God-talk we use, as long as we put it before the *but*.

I have a name for putting God after the *but*, where He belongs. I call it the Holy *But*. Jesus used the Holy *But* in the Garden of Gethsemane. My paraphrase of His famous prayer is: "Father, I don't want to be separated from You. If it's possible, let Me out of it. In fact, this is so heavy on Me right now that my soul feels very depressed...."

...yet...

... nevertheless...

... *BUT*...

...not as I will, but as You will."

That's the Holy *But*. The Holy *But* is a bridge. It moves you from the stuff you're in to faith. If we didn't have the negative in life, we'd never exercise faith. You don't deny the negative, because it's real and it's what prompts your move into faith.

"I feel awfully weak, *but* God is my strength."

"I'm sorrowful, *but* God is my peace."

"I'm in pain, *but* Christ is my sufficiency."

"I want to watch this TV show, *but* Christ in me wants to take time to listen to this person's hurt."

The Holy *But* moves you from the level of soul, from thoughts and feelings which are perfectly normal reactions to life's situations, to the level of spirit, to faith, to allowing Christ to respond to situations through you with His life. The situation is the same, but you have shifted on the inside. Where you are living *from* changes.

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That's what Jesus did in the Garden. He did not deny the situation. He did not deny His thoughts and feelings, which felt overwhelming. But He chose to live from the Father rather than from his feelings. He turned the situation, which never did change for Him, into our salvation.

To operate the Holy *But*, we have to put the stuff first and God's truth last. You can't always change the stuff, but you can change whether you're going to receive it or not. What comes after the *but* is what you have received.

David understood the Holy *But*. Listen to how he starts Psalm 13:

How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?
How long will you hide Your face from me?
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Mercy me. Quite a circumstance, isn't it? This is dark. This guy is in trouble. Then he starts to beg.

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;
Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
And my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.

Terrible situation isn't it? What's the next word?

But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

But. But. But. But. His situation hasn't changed. What's changed? Where he's living from. The *but* changed him. The *but* moved him from "How long..." to "I have confidence in the Lord."

What pushed David to make that shift? His circumstances did. That's the importance of the stuff below the line. It's because of the stuff that we exercise the faith that brings Christ's life in us into play.

Paul, too, understood the Holy *But*. He wrote in his second letter to the Corinthians:

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, *but* not crushed; perplexed, *but* not despairing; persecuted, *but* not forsaken; struck down, *but* not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body. (4:7-10)

Paul was living after the *but*. He put the trouble in front of the *but* and God, or God's perspective, after the *but*. Did that change the fact that he was afflicted, perplexed, persecuted,

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and struck down? Not at all. He continued to experience those things. But where was he now taking his life from/ "... the life of Jesus ..." He shifted within himself.

Just because we know the truth and live from the truth doesn't mean the external situation is going to change. *But we are changed.* The Holy *But* moves you from the circumstances to the solution, and that solution is a Person. It moves you from without to within, the outer to the inner, the temporal to the eternal.

Paul said that he was "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus..." That's the seen and temporal perspective. "...so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." That's the unseen and eternal perspective. In the seen and temporal realm, Paul was being persecuted and afflicted. In the unseen and eternal realm, the life of Christ was flowing out through him.

The Holy *But* always changes your perspective on a situation from external to internal. Regardless of whom you might want to say is the origin of it – Satan or God – you take that situation back to the Person within you and get God into it. "What are You about, God? It looks like the devil, *but* what are You about, God? My child is rebelling, *but* what are You about, God? I lost my job, *but* what are You about? My husband left me, *but* what are You about?" We somehow come back to say, "*But* God, You're in this." We're not talking about cause; we're talking about God being in it. He is our Source. We go within.

Most of us want to escape our circumstances, because we don't know how to operate the *but*. If we don't know inner life, we want to escape. But if we know the inner life, we understand that the Christian life is us living in the same situations that everyone else lives in, but we live differently.

No one can chain your spirit. No one can make a slave of you internally. Satan is off limits there. Your spirit and the Holy Spirit live in perfect harmony. When something is in perfect harmony, it runs smoothly. It's quiet. It's at rest.

The soul is seldom in harmony. If you get to a point where your soul is in harmony, just enjoy it, because it isn't going to last long. What's going on in the soul, the body, and the world is confrontation and strife. We are pulled and tugged. Our feelings fluctuate. Sometimes we're as high as a kite and sometimes we're dragging the floor.

That's where the difference is seen in our lives. Apart from Christ, we can't respond to life's circumstances differently than anyone else. If we try, we'll only produce something phony. Only Christ can be this life, but He doesn't operate His life in a spiritual vacuum. He operates His life in human beings. He operates it in you and me.

We experience the dying of Jesus when we say not to the stuff. "I realize that the situation is bad. I realize that my thoughts are sour. I realize that my feelings are discomforting. But I don't draw my life from my circumstances or my thoughts or my feelings. Christ is my life, and He is my sufficiency this very moment." The life of Jesus is manifested in our body when we say yes to faith.

Sometimes we allow the circumstances of our lives to produce doubt in us concerning our relationship with the Lord.

"Why don't I sense the presence of the Lord like he does?"

"Why doesn't God ever speak to me like He does to her?"

"Why doesn't He ever do with me like He does with him?"

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Have you ever said those kinds of things? I used to say them. I couldn't see God's purposes in my life's stuff. I concluded that my brand of stuff meant that I wasn't functioning right, or else such and such wouldn't have happened to me. I was still focusing on the temporal situation, either blaming God or someone else.

We can sit around and blame if we want to, but we'll never move on to the deep things of God. I can blame my father for not inviting me up on his lap and cuddling me and talking to me, instead of hiding behind the newspaper. I can say that I'm like I am because of my "mean old Daddy," but I'll stay stuck right there. How my father treated me may be a below the line fact, but that doesn't operate above the line. It doesn't determine who I am in God's eternal realm.

We won't get free of anything in our past or present, nor have peace with anything, no matter how horrible it is, until somehow we take it back to God for His answer. We all need to apply the Holy *But* to our past. "You meant it for evil, *but* God meant it for good." In a real way, below the line, our circumstances can be very good or very bad. But there is also a sense in which our circumstances are neutral. It's how we take them in that counts. Where we are living always comes after the *but*.

Our main objective now is not to manipulate the seen and temporal realm, to make it as we want it, but to interpret the seen and temporal by means of the unseen and eternal. The Holy *But* is what does it.

The temporal stuff truly is happening. Don't try to get anyone to deny what is going on. Why get them to deny a fix that God has engineered in order that God might fix them? Why not instead cause them to see the comfort that comforted you when you were in the fix that God engineered to fix you? Everyone else is giving them a technique to try to cope with their fix. But they are still in their fix. You may be the only one who sees what God sees, who knows the comfort that comforts a person when they are afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down.

There is a battle of faith when we operate the Holy *But*. However, once that battle is won in an area or circumstance, it is won. After Jesus' Holy *But* experience in the Garden, the soldiers came to arrest Him.

Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear....So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:10-11)

Once the battle of faith is settled – once you do not deny the circumstance, but come to the place of your permanent victory, to where the life is – you can go through what God gives you to go through. I'm not saying you can go through *anything*, because my anything may not be your anything. But whatever He gives you to go through; He can go through it as you.

How you go through is a witness to and salvation for others. You don't go through like the world goes through. You go through in the power of the Spirit and in the joy of the Lord. You understand that you're not alone. You understand that your life counts.

You experience victory when you agree with how God sees you. Stop debating with Him: " *But... but... but...* I know how You see me, *but...* I know what the Word says, *but...*" Just agree with how God sees you. "You see me as holy and blameless and irreproachable. Thank you. I'm holy and blameless and irreproachable." You'll be surprised at what happens within you.

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As I've said, the verse the Holy Spirit used to quicken my inner being and give me my first real word on how to live the Christian life was Galatians 2:20. The *King James Version* reads:

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.

Have you ever asked anybody to read that verse and put his or her name in there? It's amazing what it will do for you. "Dan has been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, Dan lives. No, Dan doesn't. Christ lives in Dan." Get the difference? It'll smack you right in the face. Do it for yourself.

Most people want a confirmation of God's truth first, then they'd be willing to confess it. They want seen and temporal evidence. That's the way the world works. The world says, "You act holy, and we'll call you holy." God says, "Say you're holy, and I will bring that forth in the seen and temporal." The Father is telling us, "Say I'm in you and through you and as you, and I'll show you I am. Just whisper in your spirit, 'I am.' I'll show you that you are. In all My beautifully manifested variety, I'll show you the I AM in you. *But* you must affirm before I will confirm."

Every time there's a doubt about that affirmation, you just repeat it. Repeat affirming what God has already confirmed to you. "I don't look like it, *but* I am. I don't feel like it, *but* I am. I don't think I am, *but* I am." Then God says, "That's good. That's good."

I find it helps to speak the truth out loud so my ear can hear it. I did that when I first heard who I was in Christ. I used to stand shaving and I'd say out loud who I was in Christ and who Christ was in me. I had so many thoughts that challenged that and so many actions that didn't look like that. So my ear needed to hear the truth, because to simply think it wasn't enough for me. The minute I had one truthful thought I'd have two or three more following right along behind that said, "That thought's a lie. That thought couldn't be true." But when I said it out loud, it made a lasting impression on my ear – really, on my spirit. Nobody else heard me say it, but I heard me say it. That's what I needed.

It also helps to say it to someone else. It's a blessing if you have a spouse or a friend who understands you and what God is doing in your life, who won't think you're crazy to say what your inner heart senses and knows is true. If you have a friend like that, you'll get a confirmation back, won't you? You'll get a word back from that friend: "I believe that with you. That's right. I'll take a stand with that. Yes. That's God's truth."

In a sense, the only way we know God's truth about one another is to hear each other say it. "Dan, I have been crucified with Christ. I am dead to sin. It is no longer I who live, *but* Christ lives in me..." That's true, isn't it? That is the absolute truth. *But* you don't look dead. You don't look like you're freed from sin. You don't look like Jesus Christ is the one living in you. Nevertheless, that statement is the verbal witness out of our inner being. By faith we believe that about ourselves and about each other.

These are some practical things with me. I don't teach a lot of things that many people would call "practical." To some, it's all a bunch of theory. *But* when you live it, when you know it, when you experience it, it's practical. In any case, the Holy *But* is very practical. And I recommend these few steps to solidify God's truth in your heart.

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I was talking to a group in a region of the country that was going through an economic downturn. It was the year after I had struggled with cancer, so I could relate to them going through some hardship. I said to them:

Some of you have trouble with permanent employment or the kind of employment you'd like to have. Your finances are precarious. Those are real life experiences that have the possibility of pulling us down. And they might temporarily pull us down. But the practical thing is that God has impressed upon us another way of looking at life, from His point of view. If we are going to live out of the life of Another, then we have the privilege of looking at life as that One looks at life.

That is our place of permanent victory and rest. We see what God sees. We say what God says. We live as He lives through us.