

THE TIMELESSNESS OF THE CROSS

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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by Watchman Nee

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CHAPTER ONE

THE SUFFERING OF THE CROSS

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Whenever the Holy Spirit touches me to consider how the Lord Jesus Christ died for me, a sinner, so that I could be free from the punishment of sin and have eternal life, I thank Him with tears for His grace. What suffering my Lord endured on the cross! "O my Lord, how piteous You were to die on lonely Calvary for my sins!"

The Lord Jesus was the God of glory in heaven. He was the Most Holy One. He did not have to die, and He could not die. But He had compassion for the sinners of the world. He came into this sinful world and took the form of a man. He stood in the position of a sinner and suffered the punishment which sinners deserve. He died so that we may have life. What love is this! Sins were committed by us, the sinners. Evils were done by us, the evil doers. But the punishment of sin, the suffering of hell, fell on the Lord Jesus Christ! What is this? This is substitution, this is love, and this is grace. O sinners, do you know that your sin has crucified the lovely Lord Jesus? I wish that you knew this and that through the love of the Lord Jesus, you would right now be moved to believe in this kind Savior.

When the Lord Jesus was incarnated into the world, He was born in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn. How desolate and sad this is! But even today many people have no room for Christ in their hearts. The Bible records that after He was born, they wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. How cold were the swaddling clothes! How hard was the manger! Is this the portion an honorable guest from heaven deserves from the hand of the world? As the Most High Lord, He did not have to come into such a situation. Since He loved you and me, He bore the suffering of this birth. Alas! Our sins afflicted Him.

He lived on this earth for over thirty years, without coming out from under the shadow of the cross for even a day. He had no settled home or the luxury

of a settled meal. Day by day He had no rest, but He was leading the world to believe in His coming death and to have the eternal blessing. While He lived on earth, nothing could refresh His heart. Although His disciples gave Him brief moments of joy, their doubt and ignorance and the world's unbelief and opposition, continually caused Him groaning and heartbreak. He realized that the world was hardened in its heart and could not be turned back. The result was His weeping over Jerusalem. He wept not only for that sinful city, but also for the rebellious hearts of today. O Lord, You became such a One because of my sin! If You did not love me, why did You suffer so many offenses from sinners? While the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of Man, who loved us, had no place to lay His head! Why did He put Himself into such a situation? He did so only because He loved us. The sins we committed caused Him to suffer all this. In order to save us, He suffered hunger and cold, bearing insults and shame. For our sake He was often hungry and thirsty, traveling everywhere, and eventually dying on the cross. Oh, how great is this grace! Pitiful Savior! How detestable are my sins! You are truly my Savior! I am willing to believe in You.

Although Christ's sufferings on earth were hard to bear, they were relatively easy compared to His suffering on the cross, where He bore our sins for us. His suffering in His daily life was a foreshadowing of Calvary. He came, not to live, but to die. He came to die for us, that we might live. O sinners, you must realize that if it were not for your sins, the Lord Jesus would not have had to die, and He would not have died. What a pity that we are sinners. He came to die for us. Hard-hearted sinners, will you receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior? He has died for you. Why would you ignore Him?

Remember the night He was in Gethsemane. The night weather was very cold. Many people sat and warmed themselves at the fire (Mark 14:54). During such a cold night, your Savior was outside in the garden, praying earnestly. Even "His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). What kind of scene is this? Do not laugh, and do not relax! Do not be indifferent, and do not be stubborn! Christ was this way because of your sins and because of my sins. It was as if God had begun putting our sins on Him already in the garden. The shadow of the cross came over Christ completely at that time. He was full of sorrow and pain, and in agony His sweat became like drops of blood. Oh, how I wish that you would know the suffering of sweating drops like blood! It was as if He saw, at that moment, all the sin and evil of the world, the awesomeness of God's wrath,

and Himself in the midst of them both. This was a foreshadowing of His bearing man's sin and God's wrath. Because of this He suffered such pain. Yet these were merely shadows of His coming crucifixion. But even while they were shadows, Lord, Your suffering was great.

Look! His captors came! He could have asked the Father to send twelve legions of angels to rescue Him, yet for the sake of saving us, He was willing to be arrested and have His hands bound. The Old Testament records that the angel of the Lord smote over one hundred thousand Assyrians (Isa. 37:36). One legion totals over six thousand. Surely twelve legions of angels is a large number! The power of twelve legions of angels would be great! On that day they could have easily slaughtered all the people of Jerusalem! But because He wanted to be our Savior, He bore the insults and was willing to be taken in order to die such a death. Was God taken away by man? Yes, because He wanted to save man. The God of heaven wanted to save the world, so He was willing to be taken like a thief by man! All of this was because of your sin and mine!

Behold, the Son of God taken away by man! First, He was taken to the high priest, Annas. There our Savior was struck by the hand of an ignorant servant! Why did He suffer such an offense from sinners? Because He wanted to save us from perdition and give us eternal life! Our sins afflicted Him!

Then men took Christ, bound, from Annas to Caiaphas. The Bible says that He was bound as a criminal. He stood in the position of a sinner, and He suffered what sinners deserve, in order to save them. When He was before the high priest, "they spit in His face and beat Him with their fists, and others slapped Him" (Matt. 26:67). Did He commit any sin? No one could convict Him of sins. He endured this treatment for no other reason than our sin!

Later, men brought our loving Lord Jesus to the council for another trial. There He suffered many malicious offenses and unbearable pain from the world! He wants to save us, the sinners, so He suffered to this extent. We inflicted these sufferings on Him!

The world mistreated Him without a cause. But it did not stop here. They did not give up until they had put Him to death. He was delivered to Pontius Pilate the governor and was maligned with the crime of rebellion. But God proved His Son's guiltlessness through Pontius Pilate. Three times the

governor repeated that He was innocent. Why, then, was He crucified? He was found guiltless. Why should a guiltless One need to suffer punishment for sin? There is no other reason than that there are sins in the world, and the world is sinful. "Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). The sinless Jesus Christ was crucified because of your sins. Will you still harden your heart and refuse to receive Him as your Savior? O Lord, have pity on us!

In order to absolve himself of any responsibility, Pilate delivered the Lord Jesus to Herod. There He suffered the despising and mockery of the soldiers. They put a scarlet robe on Him. Did they respect the Lord Jesus? No! The Bible says that they mocked Him. O Savior Jesus, my sin afflicted You! You endured the insults and bore the shame because You love me. I want to believe in You and love You this very moment! Finally, they took the Lord Jesus back into the common hall of the governor. My dear sinners, do you realize that He never closed His eyelids during the long night until daybreak? He was bound by men and taken here and there. He was dragged over many miles through the night. How unbearable was the grinding He suffered! He bore it all because He loves you and He loves me. Although Pilate acknowledged His innocence, he crucified Him in the end against the law.

"And Pilate...scourged Jesus and delivered Him up to be crucified" (Mark 15:15). "Scourging" seems to be a common word, but how much suffering is involved! What does it mean? A Roman whip had a wooden handle and at the end of the wooden handle were many leather thongs. At the end of each thong were heavy metal pieces. The victim would be tied to a wooden stake, with his back bared to the whipper who held the wooden handle and whipped with the leather thongs. Three stripes alone could rip open the victim's body. For our sins, the glorious Christ suffered scourging on our behalf. Did the cruel Roman soldiers care about our Savior? No, they were just like all the other sinners. "Swift are their feet to shed blood" (Rom. 3:15). How sad that our Lord Jesus was put into their hands. But thank God! "By whose bruise you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). You who are wounded and sick in soul, come with haste to be healed, for He has already received the bruise.

"And they clothed Him in purple and wove a thorny crown and put it around His head. And they began to salute Him: Rejoice, King of the Jews!" (Mark 15:17-18). This kind of mocking and jeering was intolerable and shameful! The world did not give the Lord Jesus a glorious crown but a crown

of thorns. The Lord Jesus bore the curse for us! He wore a crown of thorns which come from the curse of the world's sins. How pointed and sharp were those thorns! How could His perfect forehead endure such piercing? Yes, He was willing to endure pain and shed His blood because He knew that if He did not suffer, we would perish forever.

"And they beat His head with a reed" (Mark 15:19). The Lord Jesus had a crown of thorns. Surely, this smiting with a reed would push the thorns into His flesh more deeply. As God, Jesus Christ had never experienced this manner of piercing pain. He took man's place and died on the cross because of His love for man, saving man from the eternal perdition of the lake of fire. For this reason, He endured such unspeakable suffering. The soldiers, as instruments of the world's sins, not only afflicted Christ's body, but even afflicted His soul. They "spat at Him. And kneeling down, they bowed before Him" (Mark 15:19). After they finished mocking Him, they led Him away to be crucified.

There a soldier offered Jesus wine, mingled with gall and myrrh, to drink. It is said that if one drank this wine, the pain of crucifixion would be lessened. But our Savior would not drink it. He did not escape any suffering. He had already counted the cost before He came. He was full of love for all the sinners of the world. He was willing to bear all the affliction and all the punishment for our sins. He tasted death for sinners once for all that we might have eternal life. He was willing to take the place of sinners by tasting all the bitterness of the punishment of sins, so that sinners might have the joy of His righteousness.

At Calvary men crucified Him. Did just the Roman soldiers and Jewish council crucify Jesus Christ? In reality our sins crucified Him! A cross is constructed of a horizontal and a vertical piece of wood. The soldiers laid the Lord Jesus on the cross, propped open His hand, and nailed His hand to the wood with large iron nails. His flesh was broken, His blood flowed, and the pain pierced His inward parts! The same was done to His other hand and feet! Then they erected the cross, and all the weight of the Lord's body hung on those iron nails! Was God too severe in judging the Lord Jesus this way? No! The sins of the world are truly heavy! Our sins are numerous! The proper punishment for sins is eternal suffering in hell. The suffering of the Lord Jesus on the cross was what we sinners should have suffered. God's judgment of Him was not too severe because we should have suffered such punishment.

The work of the Lord Jesus' death for sinners is accomplished. Therefore, "He who believes into Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed into the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Our sins are like iron nails; they have crucified the Lord Jesus. When the Lord was crucified on the cross, He bled, and His blood soaked the iron nails. Our sin has crucified Him, but His blood covers our sin! This is salvation, yes, what a salvation! "And the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin" (1 John 1:7b).

The Lord Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Sinners, look at His blood-like sweat! Look at His forehead, bleeding from the piercing of thorns! Look at the blood on His back from the stripes! Look at the blood on His hands and feet! Look at the blood beneath His arms! Look at the blood from His whole body! Oh, look at the blood from His very heart! "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22b). This bleeding Savior can forgive your sins. Why do you delay? Do not be cheated by thinking that He bled and suffered only as a pattern for man. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Please do not misunderstand; He shed His blood in your stead, and He was crucified in your place. All the suffering He endured was to bear your sins. "For Christ also has suffered once for sins, the Righteous on behalf of the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). "Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree" (2:24). Sinners, if you are oppressed by sin, where are your sins? Will you bear them by yourself or hand them over to Christ? You must remember well: the death of Christ is a death for you. He loves you. Do not harden your heart. You should consider His sufferings so that, on the one hand, you may know His love and, on the other hand, realize the suffering of the coming judgment if you do not believe in Him.

We have mentioned the suffering in His body. The suffering in His heart was not any less! His disciples escaped and hid. Some cheated and betrayed Him, and some denied Him! How lonesome He was as He hung on the cross. He tread the winepress alone! No one had compassion on Him. It was a dark scene indeed! He is God, the Most Holy One, who hates sin to the uttermost. But He bore the sins of the world; He was made sin for the world. No one can fully understand such humiliation. On the one hand, Satan and his evil demons mocked Him. "If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" (Matt. 27:40). On the other hand, God abandoned Him. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). What a desolate scene! Friends,

God hates sins even if they are upon His only begotten Son, who was bearing the sins of others. God cannot tolerate sin. He had to forsake His Son even when He was bearing the sins of others. God also has to forsake sinful sinners. If you will not receive Christ as your Savior, you will be forsaken by God forever. O Lord Jesus, the suffering which You endured on the cross is beyond my mind to fathom. O Lord, You suffered to the uttermost. How pitiful You were! I want to receive You as my Savior today.

Psalm 22 describes the suffering of the Lord Jesus on the cross. David, in his experience, prophesied of the Lord's suffering. Verses 11 through 18 say, "Trouble is near, / For there is none to help me." This speaks of the scattering of the disciples. "Many bulls surround me, / The mighty bulls of Bashan encompass me. / They open their mouth at me, / Like a ravening and roaring lion." This was the rampage of Satan and his forces against the Lord. It could have been through men. "I am poured out like water." Isaiah 53:12 also says, "He poured out His soul unto death." What a suffering to pour out one's life in such a way! "All my bones are out of joint. / My heart is like wax." This describes His suffering as He hung on the cross. His heart was broken. "My strength is dried up like a shard, / And my tongue is stuck to my jaws; / You have put me in the dust of death." This was the judgment of God's flaming wrath on Him at the cross. This was also bearing man's suffering in the lake of fire. At this time, He said, "I thirst." If you compare this with the rich man's unbearable thirst in Hades, you will begin to realize the suffering of the Lord Jesus. "For dogs surround me; / A congregation of evildoers encloses me." This describes the scene around the cross. "They pierce my hands and feet." This refers to nailing His hands and feet. The Son of God was crucified on a cross! "I count all my bones." This shows the suffering of being nailed on the cross. "They divide my garments to themselves, / And for my clothing they cast lots." This was fully fulfilled on Calvary. I hope that whoever reads these few lines will ponder over these verses from the Bible until the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus becomes a vivid reality before their eyes. Alas, His death was the most cruel death in the history of the world. No one ever died as He did! Because He was full of compassion to redeem all sinners, He died such a death. Readers, if the punishment of the lake of fire cannot cause you to fear, you should be moved by the love He demonstrated on the cross and receive Him.

Now salvation is accomplished! You do not need to do anything. The Lord Jesus has completed the work of salvation for you. He paid the entire price so that you could receive a free salvation. You do not have to pay anything.

He came down from heaven so that you could ascend to heaven.

He bore the offenses of sinners so that you could obtain God's acceptance.

He was forsaken by God for a time so that you could be welcomed by God forever.

He became poor so that you might become rich.

He died on the cross so that you might live in heaven eternally.

What love can be greater than this? Sinners, please do not remain hard-hearted, and do not delay. This is the moment you should come swiftly to Him. He has not given up hope for you.

"Surely He has borne our sicknesses, / And carried our sorrows; / Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, / Smitten of God and afflicted. / But He was pierced because of our transgressions; / He was crushed because of our iniquities; / The chastening for our peace was upon Him, / And by His stripes we have been healed. / We all like sheep have gone astray; / Each of us has turned to his own way, / And Jehovah has caused the iniquity of us all / To fall on Him" (Isa. 53:4-6).

"What must I do to be saved?...Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:30-31).

CHAPTER TWO

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

The Normal Christian Life, Ch. 1

God makes it quite clear in His Word that He has only one answer to every human need—His Son, Jesus Christ. In all His dealings with us He works by taking us out of the way and substituting Christ in our place. The Son of God died instead of us for our forgiveness: He lives instead of us for our deliverance. So we can speak of two substitutions—a Substitute on the Cross who secures our forgiveness and a Substitute within who secures our victory. It will help us greatly, and save us from much confusion, if we keep constantly before us this fact, that God will answer all our questions in one way only, namely, by showing us more of His Son.

OUR DUAL PROBLEM: SINS AND SIN

We shall take now as a starting-point for our study of the problem which we find in the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and we shall approach our subject from a practical and experimental point of view. It will be helpful first of all to point out a natural division of this section of Romans into two, and to note certain striking differences in the subject-matter of its two parts.

The first eight chapters of Romans form a self-contained unit. The four-and-a-half chapters from 1:1 to 5:11 form the first half of this unit and the three-and-a-half chapters from 5:12 to 8:39 the second half. A careful reading will show us that the subject-matter of the two halves is not the same. For example, in the argument of the first section we find the plural word ‘sins’ given prominence. In the second section, however, this changed, for while the word ‘sins’ hardly occurs once, the singular word ‘sin’ is used again and again and is the subject mainly dealt with. Why is this?

It is because in the first section it is a question of the sins I have committed before God, which are many and can be enumerated, whereas in the second it is a question of sin as a principle working in me. No matter how many sins I commit, it is always the one sin principle that leads to them. I need

forgiveness for my sins, but I need also deliverance from the power of sin. The former touches my conscience, the latter my life. I may receive forgiveness for all my sins, but because of my sin I have, even then, no abiding peace of mind.

When God's light first shines into my heart my one cry is for forgiveness, for I realize I have committed sins before Him; but when once I have received forgiveness of sins I make a new discovery, namely, the discovery of sin, and I realize not only that I have committed sins before God but that there is something wrong within. I discover that I have the nature of a sinner. There is an inward inclination to sin, a power within that draws to sin. When that power breaks out I commit sins. I may seek and receive forgiveness, but then I sin once more. So life goes on in a vicious circle of sinning and being forgiven and then sinning again. I appreciate the blessed fact of God's forgiveness, but I want something more than that: I want deliverance. I need forgiveness for what I have done, but I need also deliverance from what I am.

GOD'S DUAL REMEDY: THE BLOOD AND THE CROSS

Thus in the first eight chapters of Romans two aspects of salvation are presented to us: firstly, the forgiveness of our sins, and secondly, our deliverance from sin. But now, in keeping with this fact, we must notice a further difference.

In the first part of Romans 1 to 8, we twice have reference to the Blood of the Lord Jesus, in chapter 3:25 and in chapter 5:9. In the second, a new idea is introduced in chapter 6:6, where we are said to have been "crucified" with Christ. The argument of the first part gathers round that aspect of the work of the Lord Jesus which is represented by 'the Blood' shed for our justification through "the remission of sins". This terminology is however not carried on into the second section, where the argument centers now in the aspect of His work represented by 'the Cross', that is to say, by our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. This distinction is a valuable one. We shall see that the Blood deals with what we have done, whereas the Cross deals with what we are. The Blood disposes of our sins, while the Cross strikes at the root of our capacity for sin.

The latter aspect will be the subject of our consideration in the next message.

THE PROBLEM OF OUR SINS

We begin, then, with the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and its value to us in dealing with our sins and justifying us in the sight of God. This is set forth for us in the following passages:

“All have sinned” (Romans 3:23).

“God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him” (Romans 5:8, 9).

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to shew his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the shewing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:24-26).

We shall have reason at a later stage in our study to look closely at the real nature of the fall and the way of recovery. At this point we will just remind ourselves that when sin came in it found expression in an act of disobedience to God (Romans 5:19). Now we must remember that whenever this occurs the thing that immediately follows is guilt.

Sin enters as disobedience, to create first of all a separation between God and man whereby man is put away from God. God can no longer have fellowship with him, for there is something now which hinders, and it is that which is known throughout Scripture as ‘sin’. Thus it is first of all God who says, “They are all under sin” (Romans 3:9). Then, secondly, that sin in man, which henceforth constitutes a barrier to his fellowship with God, gives rise in him to a sense of guilt—of estrangement from God. Here it is man himself who, with the help of his awakened conscience, says, “I have sinned” (Luke 15:18). Nor is this all, for sin also provides Satan with his ground of accusation before God, while our sense of guilt gives him his ground of accusation in our hearts; so that, thirdly, it is ‘the accuser of the brethren’ (Rev. 12:10) who now says, ‘You have sinned’.

To redeem us, therefore, and to bring us back to the purpose of God, the Lord Jesus had to do something about these three questions of sin and of guilt and of Satan's charge against us. Our sins had first to be dealt with, and this was effected by the precious Blood of Christ. Our guilt has to be dealt with and our guilty conscience set at rest by showing us the value of that Blood. And finally the attack of the enemy has to be met and his accusations answered. In the Scriptures the Blood of Christ is shown to operate effectually in these three ways, Godward, manward and Satanward.

There is thus an absolute need for us to appropriate these values of the Blood if we are to go on. This is a first essential. We must have a basic knowledge of the fact of the death of the Lord Jesus as our Substitute upon the Cross, and a clear apprehension of the efficacy of His Blood for our sins, for without this we cannot be said to have started upon our road. Let us look then at these three matters more closely.

THE BLOOD IS PRIMARILY FOR GOD

The Blood is for atonement and has to do first with our standing before God. We need forgiveness for the sins we have committed, lest we come under judgment; and they are forgiven, not because God overlooks what we have done but because He sees the Blood. The Blood is therefore not primarily for us but for God. If I want to understand the value of the Blood I must accept God's valuation of it, and if I do not know something of the value set upon the Blood by God I shall never know what its value is for me. It is only as the estimate that God puts upon the Blood of Christ is made known to me by His Holy Spirit that I come into the good of it myself and find how precious indeed the Blood is to me. But the first aspect of it is Godward. Throughout the Old and New Testaments the word 'blood' is used in connection with the idea of atonement, I think over a hundred times, and throughout it is something for God.

In the Old Testament calendar there is one day that has a great bearing on the matter of our sins and that day is the Day of Atonement. Nothing explains this question of sins so clearly as the description of that day. In Leviticus 16 we find that on the Day of Atonement the blood was taken from the sin offering and brought into the Most Holy Place and there sprinkled before the Lord seven times. We must be very clear about this. On that day the sin offering was offered publicly in the court of the tabernacle. Everything was

there in full view and could be seen by all. But the Lord commanded that no man should enter the tabernacle itself except the high priest. It was he alone who took the blood and, going into the Most Holy Place, sprinkled it there to make atonement before the Lord. Why? Because the high priest was a type of the Lord Jesus in His redemptive work (Hebrews 9:12), and so, in figure, he was the one who did the work. None but he could even draw near to enter in. Moreover, connected with his going in there was but one act, namely, the presenting of the blood to God as something He had accepted, something in which He could find satisfaction. It was a transaction between the high priest and God in the Sanctuary, away from the eyes of the men who were to benefit by it. The Lord required that. The Blood is therefore in the first place for Him.

Earlier even than this there is described in Exodus 12:13 the shedding of the blood of the passover lamb in Egypt for Israel's redemption. This is again, I think, one of the best types in the Old Testament of our redemption. The blood was put on the lintel and on the door-posts, whereas the meat, the flesh of the lamb, was eaten inside the house; and God said: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you". Here we have another illustration of the fact that the blood was not meant to be presented to man but to God, for the blood was put on the lintel and on the door-posts, where those feasting inside the house would not see it.

GOD IS SATISFIED

It is God's holiness, God's righteousness, which demands that a sinless life should be given for man. There is life in the Blood, and that Blood has to be poured out for me, for my sins. God is the One who requires it to be so. God is the One who demands that the Blood be presented, in order to satisfy His own righteousness, and it is He who says: 'When I see the blood', I will pass over you.' The Blood of Christ wholly satisfies God.

Now I desire to say a word at this point to my younger brethren in the Lord, for it is here that we often get into difficulties. As unbelievers we may have been wholly untroubled by our conscience until the Word of God began to arouse us. Our conscience was dead, and those with dead consciences are certainly of no use to God. But later, when we believed, our awakened conscience may have become acutely sensitive, and this can constitute a real problem to us. The sense of sin and guilt can become so great, so terrible, as almost to cripple us by causing us to lose sight of the true effectiveness of the

Blood. It seems to us that our sins are so real, and some particular sin may trouble us so many times, that we come to the point where to us our sins loom larger than the Blood of Christ.

Now the whole trouble with us is that we are trying to sense it; we are trying to feel its value and to estimate subjectively what the Blood is for us. We cannot do it; it does not work that way. The Blood is first for God to see. We then have to accept God's valuation of it. In doing so we shall find our valuation. If instead we try to come to a valuation by way of our feelings we get nothing; we remain in darkness. No, it is a matter of faith in God's Word. We have to believe that the Blood is precious to God because He says it is so (1 Peter 1:18,19). If God can accept the Blood as a payment for our sins and as the price of our redemption, then we can rest assured that the debt has been paid. If God is satisfied with the Blood, then the Blood must be acceptable. Our valuation of it is only according to His valuation—neither more nor less. It cannot, of course, be more, but it must not be less. Let us remember that He is holy and He is righteous, and that a holy and righteous God has the right to say that the Blood is acceptable in His eyes and has fully satisfied Him.

THE BLOOD AND THE BELIEVER'S ACCESS

The Blood has satisfied God; it must satisfy us also. It has therefore a second value that is manward in the cleansing of our conscience. When we come to the Epistle to the Hebrews we find that the Blood does this. We are to have "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10:22).

This is most important. Look carefully at what it says. The writer does not tell us that the Blood of the Lord Jesus cleanses our hearts, and then stop there in his statement. We are wrong to connect the heart with the Blood in quite that way. It may show a misunderstanding of the sphere in which the Blood operates to pray, 'Lord, cleanse my heart from sin by Thy Blood'. The heart, God says, is "desperately sick" (Jeremiah 17:9), and He must do something more fundamental than cleanse it: He must give us a new one.

We do not wash and iron clothing that we are going to throw away. As we shall shortly see, the 'flesh' is too bad to be cleansed; it must be crucified. The work of God within us must be something wholly new. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezekiel 36:26).

No, I do not find it stated that the Blood cleanses our hearts. Its work is not subjective in that way, but wholly objective, before God. True, the cleansing work of the Blood is seen here in Hebrews 10 to have reference to the heart, but it is in relation to the conscience. “Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”. What then is the meaning of this? It means that there was something intervening between myself and God, as a result of which I had an evil conscience whenever I sought to approach Him. It was constantly reminding me of the barrier that stood between myself and Him. But now, through the operation of the precious Blood, something new has been effected before God which has removed that barrier, and God has made that fact known to me in His Word. When that has been believed in and accepted, my conscience is at once cleared and my sense of guilt removed, and I have no more an evil conscience toward God.

Every one of us knows what a precious thing it is to have a conscience void of offense in our dealings with God. A heart of faith and a conscience clear of any and every accusation are both equally essential to us, since they are interdependent. As soon as we find our conscience is uneasy our faith leaks away and immediately we find we cannot face God. In order therefore to keep going on with God we must know the up-to-date value of the Blood. God keeps short accounts, and we are made nigh by the Blood every day, every hour and every minute. It never loses its efficacy as our ground of access if we will but lay hold upon it. When we enter the most Holy Place, on what ground dare we enter but by the Blood?

But I want to ask myself, am I really seeking the way into the Presence of God by the Blood or by something else? What do I mean when I say, ‘by the Blood’? I mean simply that I recognize my sins, that I confess that I have need of cleansing and of atonement, and that I come to God on the basis of the finished work of the Lord Jesus. I approach God through His merit alone, and never on the basis of my attainment; never, for example, on the ground that I have been extra kind or patient today, or that I have done something for the Lord this morning. I have to come by way of the Blood every time. The temptation to so many of us when we try to approach God is to think that because God has been dealing with us—because He has been taking steps to bring us into something more of Himself and has been teaching us deeper lessons of the Cross—He has thereby set before us new standards, and that only by attaining to these can we have a clear conscience before Him. No! A

clear conscience is never based upon our attainment; it can only be based on the work of the Lord Jesus in the shedding of His Blood.

I may be mistaken, but I feel very strongly that some of us are thinking in terms such as these: ‘Today I have been a little more careful; today I have been doing a little better; this morning I have been reading the Word of God in a warmer way, so today I can pray better!’ Or again, ‘Today I have had a little difficulty with the family; I began the day feeling very gloomy and moody; I am not feeling too bright now; it seems that there must be something wrong; therefore I cannot approach God.’

What, after all, is your basis of approach to God? Do you come to Him on the uncertain ground of your feeling, the feeling that you may have achieved something for God today? Or is your approach based on something far more secure, namely, the fact that the Blood has been shed, and that God looks on that Blood and is satisfied? Of course, were it conceivably possible for the Blood to suffer any change, the basis of your approach to God might be less trustworthy. But the Blood has never changed and never will. Your approach to God is therefore always in boldness; and that boldness is yours through the Blood and never through your personal attainment. Whatever be your measure of attainment today or yesterday or the day before, as soon as you make a conscious move into the Most Holy Place, immediately you have to take your stand upon the safe and only ground of the shed Blood. Whether you have had a good day or a bad day, whether you have consciously sinned or not, your basis of approach is always the same—the Blood of Christ. That is the ground upon which you may enter, and there is no other.

As with many other stages of our Christian experience, this matter of access to God has two phases, an initial and a progressive one. The former is presented to us in Ephesians 2 and the latter in Hebrews 10. Initially, our standing with God was secured by the Blood, for we are “made nigh in the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13). But thereafter our ground of continual access is still by the Blood, for the apostle exhorts us: “Having therefore... boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near” (Heb. 10:19, 22). To begin with I was made nigh by the Blood, and to continue in that new relationship I come through the Blood every time. It is not that I was saved on one basis and that I now maintain my fellowship on another. You say, ‘That is very simple; it is the A.B.C. of the Gospel.’ Yes, but the trouble with many of us is that we have moved away from the A.B.C. We have thought we had

progressed and so could dispense with it, but we can never do so. No, my initial approach to God is by the Blood, and every time I come before Him it is the same. Right to the end it will always and only be on the ground of the Blood.

This does not mean at all that we should live a careless life, for we shall shortly study another aspect of the death of Christ which shows us that anything but that is contemplated. But for the present let us be satisfied with the Blood, that it is there and that it is enough.

We may be weak, but looking at our weakness will never make us strong. No trying to feel bad and doing penance will help us to be even a little holier. There is no help there, so let us be bold in our approach because of the Blood: ‘Lord, I do not know fully what the value of the Blood is, but I know that the Blood has satisfied Thee; so the Blood is enough for me, and it is my only plea. I see now that whether I have really progressed, whether I have really attained to something or not, is not the point. Whenever I come before Thee, it is always on the ground of the precious Blood. Then our conscience is really clear before God. No conscience could ever be clear apart from the Blood. It is the Blood that gives us boldness.

“No more conscience of sins”: these are tremendous words of Hebrews 10:2. We are cleansed from every sin; and we may truly echo the words of Paul: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin” (Romans 4:8).

OVERCOMING THE ACCUSER

In view of what we have said we can now turn to face the enemy, for there is a further aspect of the Blood which is Satanward. Satan’s most strategic activity in this day is as the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10) and it is as this that our Lord confronts him with His special ministry as High Priest “through his own blood” (Hebrews 9:12).

How then does the Blood operate against Satan? It does so by putting God on the side of man against him. The Fall brought something into man which gave Satan a footing within him, with the result that God was compelled to withdraw Himself. Man is now outside the garden—beyond reach of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)—because he is inwardly estranged from God. Because of what man has done, there is something in him which, until it is removed,

renders God morally unable to defend him. But the Blood removes that barrier and restores man to God and God to man. Man is in favor now, and because God is on his side he can face Satan without fear.

You remember that verse in John's first Epistle—and this is the translation of it I like best: "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin" [1] It is not exactly "all sin" in the general sense, but every sin, every item. What does it mean? Oh, it is a marvelous thing! God is the light, and as we walk in the light with Him everything is exposed and open to that light, so that God can see it all—and yet the Blood is able to cleanse from every sin. What a cleansing! It is not that I have not a profound knowledge of myself, nor that God has not a perfect knowledge of me. It is not that I try to hide something nor that God tries to overlook something. No, it is that He is in the light and I too am in the light, and that there the precious Blood cleanses me from every sin. The Blood is enough for that!

[1] 1 John 1:7: Marginal reading of New Translation by J. N. Darby

Some of us, oppressed by our own weakness, may at times have been tempted to think that there are sins which are almost unforgivable. Let us remember the word: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from every sin." Big sins, small sins, sins which may be very black and sins which appear to be not so black, sins which I think can be forgiven and sins which seem unforgivable, yes, all sins, conscious or unconscious, remembered or forgotten, are included in those words: "every sin". "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin", and it does so because in the first place it satisfies God.

Since God, seeing all our sins in the light, can forgive them on the basis of the Blood, what ground of accusation has Satan? Satan may accuse us before Him, but, "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31). God points him to the Blood of His dear Son. It is the sufficient answer against which Satan has no appeal. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33, 34).

So here again our need is to recognize the absolute sufficiency of the precious Blood. "Christ having come a high priest... through his own blood,

entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:11, 12). He was Redeemer once. He has been High Priest and Advocate for nearly two thousand years. He stands there in the presence of God, and “he is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1, 2). Note the words of Hebrews 9:14: “How much more shall the blood of Christ...” They underline the sufficiency of His ministry. It is enough for God.

What then of our attitude to Satan? This is important, for he accuses us not only before God but in our own conscience also. ‘You have sinned, and you keep on sinning. You are weak, and God can have nothing more to do with you.’ This is his argument. And our temptation is to look within and in self-defense to try to find in ourselves, in our feelings or our behavior, some ground for believing that Satan is wrong. Alternatively we are tempted to admit our helplessness and, going to the other extreme, to yield to depression and despair. Thus accusation becomes one of the greatest and most effective of Satan’s weapons. He points to our sins and seeks to charge us with them before God, and if we accept his accusations we go down immediately.

Now the reason why we so readily accept his accusations is that we are still hoping to have some righteousness of our own. The ground of our expectation is wrong. Satan has succeeded in making us look in the wrong direction. Thereby he wins his point, rendering us ineffective. But if we have learned to put no confidence in the flesh, we shall not wonder if we sin, for the very nature of the flesh is to sin. Do you understand what I mean? It is because we have not come to appreciate our true nature and to see how helpless we are that we still have some expectation in ourselves, with the result that, when Satan comes along and accuses us, we go down under it.

God is well able to deal with our sins; but He cannot deal with a man under accusation, because such a man is not trusting in the Blood. The Blood speaks in his favor, but his is listening instead to Satan. Christ is our Advocate but we, the accused, side with the accuser. We have not recognized that we are unworthy of anything but death; that, as we shall shortly see, we are only fit to be crucified anyway. We have not recognized that it is God alone that can answer the accuser, and that in the precious Blood He has already done so.

Our salvation lies in looking away to the Lord Jesus and in seeing that the Blood of the Lamb has met the whole situation created by our sins and has answered it. That is the sure foundation on which we stand. Never should we

try to answer Satan with our good conduct but always with the Blood. Yes, we are sinful, but, praise God! the Blood cleanses us from every sin. God looks upon the Blood whereby His Son has met the charge, and Satan has no more ground of attack. Our faith in the precious Blood and our refusal to be moved from that position can alone silence his charges and put him to flight (Romans 8:33, 34); and so it will be, right on to the end (Revelation 12:11). Oh, what an emancipation it would be if we saw more of the value of God's eyes of the precious Blood of His dear Son!

CHAPTER THREE

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

The Normal Christian Life, Ch. 2

We have seen that Romans 1 to 8 falls into two sections, in the first of which we are shown that the Blood deals with what we have done, while in the second we shall see that the Cross [2] deals with what we are. We need the Blood for forgiveness; we need also the Cross for deliverance. We have dealt briefly above with the first of these two and we shall move on now to the second; but before we do so we will look for a moment at a few more features of this passage which serve to emphasize the difference in subject matter and argument between the two halves.

SOME FURTHER DISTINCTIONS

Two aspects of the resurrection are mentioned in the two sections, in chapters 4 and 6. In Romans 4:25 the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is mentioned in relation to our justification: "Jesus our Lord... was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification." Here the matter in view is that of our standing before God. But in Romans 6:4 the resurrection is spoken of as imparting to us new life with a view to a holy walk: "That like as Christ was raised from the dead... so we also might walk in newness of life." Here the matter before us is behavior.

Again, peace is spoken of in both sections, in the fifth and eighth chapters. Romans 5 tells of peace with God which is the effect of justification by faith in His Blood: "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (5:1 mg.) This means that, now that I have forgiveness of sins, God will no longer be a cause of dread and trouble to me. I who was an enemy to God have been "reconciled... through the death of his Son" (5:10). I very soon find, however, that I am going to be a great cause of trouble to myself. There is still unrest within, for within me there is something that draws me to sin. There is peace with God, but there is no peace with myself. There is in fact civil war in my own heart. This condition is well depicted in Romans 7 where the flesh and the spirit are seen to be in deadly conflict within me. But from this the argument leads in chapter 8 to

the inward peace of a walk in the Spirit. “The mind of the flesh is death”, because it “is enmity against God”, “but the mind of the spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6, 7).

Looking further still we find that the first half of the section deals generally speaking with the question of justification (see, for example, Romans 3:24-26; 4:5, 25), while the second half has as its main topic the corresponding question of sanctification (see Rom.6:19, 22). When we know the precious truth of justification by faith we still know only half of the story. We still have only solved the problem of our standing before God. As we go on, God has something more to offer us, namely, the solution of the problem of our conduct, and the development of thought in these chapters serves to emphasize this. In each case the second step follows from the first, and if we know only the first then we are still leading a sub-normal Christian life. How then can we live a normal Christian life? How do we enter in? Well, of course, initially we must have forgiveness of sins, we must have justification, we must have peace with God: these are our indispensable foundation. But with that basis truly established through our first act of faith in Christ, it is yet clear from the above that we must move on to something more.

So we see that objectively the Blood deals with our sins. The Lord Jesus has borne them on the Cross for us as our Substitute and has thereby obtained for us forgiveness, justification and reconciliation. But we must now go a step further in the plan of God to understand how He deals with the sin principle in us. The Blood can wash away my sins, but it cannot wash away my ‘old man’. It needs the Cross to crucify me. The Blood deals with the sins, but the Cross must deal with the sinner.

You will scarcely find the word ‘sinner’ in the first four chapters of Romans. This is because there the sinner himself is not mainly in view, but rather the sins he has committed. The word ‘sinner’ first comes into prominence only in chapter 5, and it is important to notice how the sinner is there introduced. In that chapter a sinner is said to be a sinner because he is born a sinner; not because he has committed sins. The distinction is important. It is true that often when a Gospel worker wants to convince a man in the street that he is a sinner, he will use the favorite verse Romans 3:23, where it says that “all have sinned”; but this use of the verse is not strictly justified by the Scriptures. Those who so use it are in danger of arguing the wrong way round, for the teaching of Romans is not that we are sinners because we commit sins, but

that we sin because we are sinners. We are sinners by constitution rather than by action. As Romans 5:19 expresses it: “Through the one man’s disobedience the many were made (or ‘constituted’) sinners”.

How were we constituted sinners? By Adam’s disobedience. We do not become sinners by what we have done but because of what Adam has done and has become. I speak English, but I am not thereby constituted an Englishman. I am in fact a Chinese. So chapter 3 draws our attention to what we have done—“all have sinned”—but it is not because we have done it that we become sinners.

I once asked a class of children. ‘Who is a sinner?’ and their immediate reply was, ‘One who sins’. Yes, one who sins is a sinner, but the fact that he sins is merely the evidence that he is already a sinner; it is not the cause. One who sins is a sinner, but it is equally true that one who does not sin, if he is of Adam’s race, is a sinner too, and in need of redemption. Do you follow me? There are bad sinners and there are good sinners, there are moral sinners and there are corrupt sinners, but they are all alike sinners. We sometimes think that if only we had not done certain things all would be well; but the trouble lies far deeper than in what we do: it lies in what we are. A Chinese may be born in America and be unable to speak Chinese at all, but he is a Chinese for all that, because he was born a Chinese. It is birth that counts. So I am a sinner not of my behavior but of my heredity, my parentage. I am not a sinner because I sin, but I sin because I come of the wrong stock. I sin because I am a sinner.

We are apt to think that what we have done is very bad, but that we ourselves are not so bad. God is taking pains to show us that we ourselves are wrong, fundamentally wrong. The root trouble is the sinner; he must be dealt with. Our sins are dealt with by the Blood, but we ourselves are dealt with by the Cross. The Blood procures our pardon for what we have done; the Cross procures our deliverance from what we are.

MAN’S STATE BY NATURE

We come therefore to Romans 5:12-21. In this great passage, grace is brought into contrast with sin and the obedience of Christ is set against the disobedience of Adam. It is placed at the beginning of the second section of Romans (5:12 to 8:39) with which we shall now be particularly concerned,

and its argument leads to a conclusion which lies at the foundation of our further meditations. What is that conclusion? It is found in verse 19 already quoted: “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.” Here the Spirit of God is seeking to show us first what we are, and then how we came to be what we are.

At the beginning of our Christian life we are concerned with our doing, not with our being; we are distressed rather by what we have done than by what we are. We think that if only we could rectify certain things we should be good Christians, and we set out therefore to change our actions. But the result is not what we expected. We discover to our dismay that it is something more than just a case of trouble on the outside—that there is in fact more serious trouble on the inside. We try to please the Lord, but find something within that does not want to please Him. We try to be humble, but there is something in our very being that refuses to be humble. We try to be loving, but inside we feel most unloving. We smile and try to look very gracious, but inwardly we feel decidedly ungracious. The more we try to rectify matters on the outside the more we realize how deep-seated the trouble is within. Then we come to the Lord and say, ‘Lord, I see it now! Not only what I have done is wrong; I am wrong.’

The conclusion of Romans 5:19 is beginning to dawn upon us. We are sinners. We are members of a race of people who are constitutionally other than what God intended them to be. By the Fall a fundamental change took place in the character of Adam whereby he became a sinner, one constitutionally unable to please God; and the family likeness which we all share is no merely superficial one but extends to our inward character also. We have been “constituted sinners”. How did this come about? “By the disobedience of one”, says Paul. Let me try to illustrate this.

My name is Nee. It is a fairly common Chinese name. How did I come by it? I did not choose it. I did not go through the list of possible Chinese names and select this one. That my name is Nee is in fact not my doing at all, and, moreover, nothing I can do can alter it. I am a Nee because my father was a Nee, and my father was a Nee because my grandfather was a Nee. If I act like a Nee I am a Nee, and if I act unlike a Nee I am still a Nee. If I become President of the Chinese Republic I am a Nee, or if I become a beggar in the

street I am still a Nee. Nothing I do or refrain from doing will make me other than a Nee.

We are sinners not because of ourselves but because of Adam. It is not because I individually have sinned that I am a sinner but because I was in Adam when he sinned. Because by birth I come of Adam, therefore I am a part of him. What is more, I can do nothing to alter this. I cannot by improving my behavior make myself other than a part of Adam and so a sinner.

In China I was once talking in this strain and remarked, 'We have all sinned in Adam'. A man said, 'I don't understand', so I sought to explain it in this way. 'All Chinese trace their descent from Huang-ti', I said. 'Over four thousand years ago he had a war with Si-iu. His enemy was very strong, but nevertheless Huang-ti overcame and slew him. After this Huang-ti founded the Chinese nation. Four thousand years ago therefore our nation was founded by Huang-ti. Now what would have happened if Huang-ti had not killed his enemy, but had been himself killed instead? Where would you be now?' 'There would be no me at all', he answered. 'Oh, no! Huang-ti can die his death and you can live your life.' 'Impossible!' he cried, 'If he had died, then I could never have lived, for I have derived my life from him.'

Do you see the oneness of human life? Our life comes from Adam. If your great-grandfather had died at the age of three, where would you be? You would have died in him! Your experience is bound up with his. Now in just the same way the experience of every one of us is bound up with that of Adam. None can say, 'I have not been in Eden' for potentially we all were there when Adam yielded to the serpent's words. So we are all involved in Adam's sin, and by being born "in Adam" we receive from him all that he became as a result of his sin—that is to say, the Adam-nature which is the nature of a sinner. We derive our existence from him, and because his life became a sinful life, a sinful nature, therefore the nature which we derive from him is also sinful. So, as we have said, the trouble is in our heredity, not in our behavior. Unless we can change our parentage there is no deliverance for us.

But it is in this very direction that we shall find the solution of our problem, for that is exactly how God has dealt with the situation.

AS IN ADAM SO IN CHRIST

In Romans 5:12 to 21 we are not only told something about Adam; we are told also something about the Lord Jesus. “As through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.” In Adam we receive everything that is of Adam; in Christ we receive everything that is of Christ.

The terms ‘in Adam’ and ‘in Christ’ are too little understood by Christians, and, at the risk of repetition, I wish again to emphasize by means of an illustration the hereditary and racial significance of the term ‘in Christ’. This illustration is to be found in the letter to the Hebrews. Do you remember that in the earlier part of the letter the writer is trying to show that Melchizedek is greater than Levi? You recall that the point to be proved is that the priesthood of Christ is greater than the priesthood of Aaron who was of the tribe of Levi. Now in order to prove that, he has first to prove that the priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than the priesthood of Levi, for the simple reason that the priesthood of Christ is “after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 7:14-17), while that of Aaron is, of course, after the order of Levi. If the writer can demonstrate to us that Melchizedek is greater than Levi, then he has made his point. That is the issue, and he proves it in a remarkable way.

He tells us in Hebrews chapter 7 that one day Abraham, returning from the battle of the kings (Genesis 14), offered a tithe of his spoils to Melchizedek and received from him a blessing. Inasmuch as Abraham did so, Levi is therefore of less account than Melchizedek. Why? Because the fact that Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek. But if that is true, then Jacob also ‘in Abraham’ offered to Melchizedek, which in turn means that Levi ‘in Abraham’ offered to Melchizedek. It is evident that the lesser offers to the greater (Hebrews 7:7). So Levi is less in standing than Melchizedek, and therefore the priesthood of Aaron is inferior to that of the Lord Jesus. Levi at the time of the battle of the kings was not yet even thought of. Yet he was “in the loins of his father” Abraham, and, “so to say, through Abraham”, he offered (Hebrews 7:9, 10).

Now this is the exact meaning of ‘in Christ’. Abraham, as the head of the family of faith, includes the whole family in himself. When he offered to Melchizedek, the whole family offered in him to Melchizedek. They did not offer separately as individuals, but they were in him, and therefore in making his offering he included with himself all his seed.

So we are presented with a new possibility. In Adam all was lost. Through the disobedience of one man we were all constituted sinners. By him sin entered and death through sin, and throughout the race sin has reigned unto death from that day on. But now a ray of light is cast upon the scene. Through the obedience of Another we may be constituted righteous. Where sin abounded grace did much more abound, and as sin reigned unto death, even so may grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:19-21). Our despair is in Adam; our hope is in Christ.

THE DIVINE WAY OF DELIVERANCE

God clearly intends that this consideration should lead to our practical deliverance from sin. Paul makes this quite plain when he opens chapter 6 of his letter with the question: “Shall we continue in sin?” His whole being recoils at the very suggestion. “God forbid!”, he exclaims. How could a holy God be satisfied to have unholy, sin-fettered children? And so “how shall we any longer live therein?” (Romans 6:1, 2). God has surely therefore made adequate provision that we should be set free from sin’s dominion.

But here is our problem. We were born sinners; how then can we cut off our sinful heredity? Seeing that we were born in Adam, how can we get out of Adam? Let me say at once, the Blood cannot take us out of Adam. There is only one way. Since we came in by birth we must go out by death. To do away with our sinfulness we must do away with our life. Bondage to sin came by birth; deliverance from sin comes by death—and it is just this way of escape that God has provided. Death is the secret of emancipation. “We... died to sin” (Romans 6:2).

But how can we die? Some of us have tried very hard to get rid of this sinful life, but we have found it most tenacious. What is the way out? It is not by trying to kill ourselves, but by recognizing that God has dealt with us in Christ. This is summed up in the apostle’s next statement: “All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death” (Romans 6:3).

But if God has dealt with us ‘in Christ Jesus’ then we have got to be in Him for this to become effective, and that now seems just as big a problem. How are we to ‘get into’ Christ? Here again God comes to our help. We have in fact no way of getting in, but, what is more important, we need not try to get in, for we are in. What we could not do for ourselves God has done for us. He has

put us into Christ. Let me remind you of I Corinthians 1:30. I think that is one of the best verses of the whole New Testament: 'Ye are in Christ'. How? "Of him (that is, 'of God') are ye in Christ." Praise God! it is not left to us either to devise a way of entry or to work it out. We need not plan how to get in. God has planned it; and He has not only planned it but He has also performed it. 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus'. We are in; therefore we need not try to get in. It is a Divine act, and it is accomplished.

Now if this is true, certain things follow. In the illustration from Hebrews 7 which we considered above we saw that 'in Abraham' all Israel—and therefore Levi who was not yet born—offered tithes to Melchizedek. They did not offer separately and individually, but they were in Abraham when he offered, and his offering included all his seed. This, then, is a true figure of ourselves as 'in Christ'. When the Lord Jesus was on the Cross all of us died—not individually, for we had not yet been born—but, being in Him, we died in Him. "One died for all, therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14). When He was crucified all of us were crucified.

Many a time when preaching in the villages of China one has to use very simple illustrations for deep Divine truth. I remember once I took up a small book and put a piece of paper into it, and I said to those very simple ones, 'Now look carefully. I take a piece of paper. It has an identity of its own, quite separate from this book. Having no special purpose for it at the moment I put it into the book. Now I do something with the book. I post it to Shanghai. I do not post the paper, but the paper has been put into the book. Then where is the paper? Can the book go to Shanghai and the paper remain here? Can the paper have a separate destiny from the book? No! Where the book goes the paper goes. If I drop the book in the river the paper goes too, and if I quickly take it out again I recover the paper also. Whatever experience the book goes through the paper goes through with it, for it is in the book.'

"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." The Lord God Himself has put us in Christ, and in His dealing with Christ God has dealt with the whole race. Our destiny is bound up with His. What He has gone through we have gone through, for to be 'in Christ' is to have been identified with Him in both His death and resurrection. He was crucified: then what about us? Must we ask God to crucify us? Never! When Christ was crucified we were crucified; and His crucifixion is past, therefore ours cannot be future. I challenge you to find one text in the New Testament telling us that our crucifixion is in the future. All

the references to it are in the Greek aorist, which is the ‘once-for-all’ tense, the ‘eternally past’ tense. (See: Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14). And just as no man could ever commit suicide by crucifixion, for it were a physical impossibility to do so, so also, in spiritual terms, God does not require us to crucify ourselves. We were crucified when He was crucified, for God put us there in Him. That we have died in Christ is not merely a doctrinal position, it is an eternal fact.

HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION REPRESENTATIVE AND INCLUSIVE

The Lord Jesus, when He died on the Cross, shed His Blood, thus giving His sinless life to atone for our sin and to satisfy the righteousness and holiness of God. To do so was the prerogative of the Son of God alone. No man could have a share in that. The Scripture has never told us that we shed our blood with Christ. In His atoning work before God He acted alone; no other could have a part. But the Lord did not die only to shed His Blood: He died that we might die. He died as our Representative. In His death He included you and me.

We often use the terms ‘substitution’ and ‘identification’ to describe these two aspects of the death of Christ. Now many a time the use of the word ‘identification’ is good. But identification would suggest that the thing begins from our side: that I try to identify myself with the Lord. I agree that the word is true, but it should be used later on. It is better to begin with the fact that the Lord included me in His death. It is the ‘inclusive’ death of the Lord which puts me in a position to identify myself, not that I identify myself in order to be included. It is God’s inclusion of me in Christ that matters. It is something God has done. For that reason those two New Testament words “in Christ” are always very dear to my heart.

The death of the Lord Jesus is inclusive. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is alike inclusive. We have looked at the first chapter of I Corinthians to establish the fact that we are “in Christ Jesus”. Now we will go to the end of the same letter to see something more of what this means. In I Corinthians 15:45, 47 two remarkable names or titles are used of the Lord Jesus. He is spoken of there as “the last Adam” and He is spoken of too as “the second man”. Scripture does not refer to Him as the second Adam but as “the last

Adam”; nor does it refer to Him as the last Man, but as “the second man”. The distinction is to be noted, for it enshrines a truth of great value.

As the last Adam, Christ is the sum total of humanity; as the second Man He is the Head of a new race. So we have here two unions, the one relating to His death and the other to His resurrection. In the first place His union with the race as “the last Adam” began historically at Bethlehem and ended at the cross and the tomb. In it He gathered up into Himself all that was in Adam and took it to judgment and death. In the second place our union with Him as “the second man” begins in resurrection and ends in eternity—which is to say, it never ends—for, having in His death done away with the first man in whom God’s purpose was frustrated, He rose again as Head of a new race of men, in whom that purpose shall be fully realized.

When therefore the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, He was crucified as the last Adam. All that was in the first Adam was gathered up and done away in Him. We were included there. As the last Adam He wiped out the old race; as the second Man He brings in the new race. It is in His resurrection that He stands forth as the second Man, and there too we are included. “For if we have become united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection” (Romans 6:5). We died in Him as the last Adam; we live in Him as the second Man. The Cross is thus the power of God which translates us from Adam to Christ.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

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Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (2),
Chaps. 52, 53

A SINNER'S TWOFOLD NEED

From the time man ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and was driven out of the garden of Eden by God, he lost his chance to receive God's life. On the one hand, he failed God's original purpose in creating man, and on the other hand, he sinned and became a sinner. Therefore, God had to deal with him not only as a man, but also as a sinner. To this end, God sent Christ to the world. He shed His blood and solved the problem of man's sins. This remedial work took care of the sinner. But God's work is not complete if He only saves us from our sins with His blood. The forgiveness of our sins is not the end of God's goal. The forgiveness of sins, by itself, will not bring us back to God's heart's desire. Therefore, we cannot be satisfied, happy, or at peace with just the forgiveness of sins.

Sin is like the product from a factory, while the sinner is like the factory itself. The sin-products have to be removed, but as long as the sin-factory still exists it will easily continue to bring its product back into the market. Our heart is unclean and deceitful above all things. No one can open his heart for others to examine. Such a deceitful and unclean heart cannot be cleansed by the blood. Man has to have his heart changed. The Lord's blood does not cleanse man's heart; it only cleanses man of his sins. The blood cannot wash man's filthy heart; it only washes the conscience of condemnation.

At the time of our salvation, we accepted the blood, and its efficacy brought us the forgiveness of sins. Yet His blood did not change our heart. We may have been dishonest before we were saved. However, we can still lie after we are saved. We may have been covetous before we were saved, and we can still be somewhat covetous after we are saved. We may have been unrighteous before we were saved, and we can still be unrighteous after we are saved. We

may have been unclean before we were saved, and we can still be unclean after we are saved. We may have been unforgiving before we were saved, and we can still be very mean after we are saved. At the time we were saved, we might have thought that being a Christian was a smooth-sailing journey. Yet we discovered that things were contrary to our anticipations. We discovered that a continuous succession of sinful acts continued to be found in us even though we had been washed of our past sins by the precious blood of the Lord. Hence, the Lord's blood not only must wash away the sins that we have committed, but He must come up with a way to deal with the sin-factory that manufactures these sins. If the factory is not dealt with, the removal of only the sin-products would be like putting the cart before the horse. Soon products will roll out of the factory again. In order to deal with the products thoroughly, the factory itself must be destroyed. Sins have been dealt with already, but the person who produces the sins may still be there. Therefore, there is still the need to deal with the person.

There was a believer in Chuenchow who experienced much victory and peace during the first two or three weeks after his salvation. But after a few weeks, he began to lose his temper just as he once did. He was bothered very much. When I spoke to him, I illustrated his condition in the following way. Once I met a young child who asked me to wash his clay doll. I told him that a clay doll could not be washed. However, he insisted that I do it for him. Eventually, I had to give in. The more I washed the doll, the dirtier it became. Eventually, all the hair of the doll came off, and the child cried bitterly at the sight. I said, "I told you so. A clay doll cannot be washed. Do not cry anymore. I will buy you a new doll." We are like the clay doll; if we try to wash our sins in an outward way, the more we wash, the dirtier we will become. We must deal with the problem from within. Only then can we settle the problem of sin once and for all.

GOD'S TWOFOLD SALVATION— THE BLOOD AND THE CROSS

Man is filled with sin inwardly and outwardly. Whatever man does is sin, and whatever man has not done is also sin. Man is truly corrupted from within. We are like a heavy debtor who owes a great deal of money. We have no means to pay our debts, yet the Lord paid all of our debts. Thank the Lord that He has paid all of our debts. This is a tremendous relief to us. However,

we are the kind of person who makes a thousand dollars, but spends twelve thousand. Our Lord has paid our debts, but we continue to borrow. We are habitual borrowers, and we live by borrowing. Our sins are forgiven, but we continue to sin. We, our person, are sinners, and we are constituted with sin. Hence, there is a need to not only deal with our acts of sins, but the person who sins as well. Sins are dealt with by the blood of Christ, whereas the person is dealt with by the cross of Christ.

The blood washes us of our sins and removes our outward acts of sins. Without the blood, man cannot be redeemed by God. But there is also the cross that puts to death the old man and annuls man's inward nature of sin. The Bible never says that the blood can wash away the "I," the self, the old man, the ego, or the flesh. The clay doll can never be washed clean. The biblical way to deal with the sinner is to "remove him." This is the work of the cross. The cross takes away the old man and crucifies it (Rom. 6:6). There is no place in the Bible that indicates the blood washes away our self, our old man, our lusts, or our flesh. A friend wrote a hymn that said, "The blood washes clean all lusts and evils." This is wrong. Lust can only be crucified by the cross (Gal 5:24), because lust is not an outward act; it is related to our inward nature. We must be careful to differentiate between the function of the blood and the function of the cross.

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING CONCERNING THE BLOOD

In the Old Testament

Let us now spend some time to study the Bible and see what it says about the blood. Leviticus 17:11 says, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make propitiation for your souls; for it is the blood which, by the life, makes propitiation." The Old Testament mentions the blood over three hundred times, but Leviticus 17:11 is the only place where the function of the blood is explained. This is the only place in the Old Testament that tells us that the blood is for propitiation.

In the Four Gospels

We also need to see what the four Gospels say about the blood. There are not many instances in the four Gospels where the blood is mentioned. In Matthew 26:28, the Lord spoke to the disciples before His betrayal, saying,

"This is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." This shows us the function of the blood. The blood is for the forgiveness of sins. On the night before the Lord's death, He explained the function of the blood, which is for the forgiveness of sins. Contrary to the assertion of the modernists, who say that the blood was merely an indication of sacrifice, the blood of Christ was shed for man's redemption.

The Apostle Paul

Let us consider the apostle's concept of the blood. In Romans 3:25 the apostle Paul said, "Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred." The word "propitiation" is the same as the word denoting mercy seat in Greek; it is the flat covering on top of the ark. It is also called the throne of grace. Within the ark was the law, which condemned man and judged his sins. But the covering, that is, the throne of grace, was on top of the ark. This means that all sins are under the throne of grace, and God does not see them anymore. Paul told us that this propitiation cover is just the Lord Jesus, and that it is enacted by God through the blood of Jesus.

A Seventh-day Adventist believer once hung the Ten Commandments on the wall, with the fourth commandment cut out as a reminder that breaking the Sabbath is breaking the fourth commandment. Actually even when a person keeps the Sabbath, he sins against all ten commandments as soon as he breaks any of the other commandments.

Thank God that the Lord Jesus has become our propitiation cover. He is sitting on top of the law. The law cannot condemn us any longer. The only way we can be condemned by the law is if we put aside the Lord Jesus (Rom. 8:33-34).

Ephesians 1:7, 2:13, and Hebrews 9:12-14 and 22 say that Christ shed His blood to redeem us from sin. The blood is for the washing away of sins; it is not to wash our hearts. Man's heart is too evil, and the blood cannot wash it. Man's heart is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9) and all wicked things proceed from within the heart (Mark 7:23). The blood does not change a wicked heart into a good heart; the blood only washes away our sins and cleanses us of them. There is no verse in the Bible that tells us that the Lord's

blood washes our heart. Some may say that in the Chinese Union Version Hebrews 10:22 says that the blood washes our heart. But actually this verse only says that the blood cleanses our conscience. Our conscience is related to sin. When a man sins, his conscience is no longer at peace. Once a man sins, he dares not come to God. There is a barrier between him and God. He dares not face God and is afraid to see Him. But the blood of Jesus has been shed. God cannot be unrighteous; He has to wash away our sins. We have incurred a debt of sin, and the blood has paid our debt for us. The Lord Jesus has shed His blood for us, and God has to acknowledge this. Since Christ has borne our sins for us, God can no longer claim any payment from us. A debt can only claim payment once; it cannot claim payment twice. Once we have such a faith, our conscience will be at peace.

Some have asked if a person is saved through God's righteousness or through His grace. We are saved through His righteousness. From the time the Son of God was born to the time He was crucified, we see grace. But from the time He was lifted up on the cross, we see God's righteousness. Because the Lord has died, God has to forgive us. It was perfectly all right for God not to send His Son to die for us; this would merely have meant that God was not being gracious to us. But now that He has sent His Son to die for us, He has to forgive us because He cannot be unrighteous. Being unrighteous means to sin, and God cannot sin; therefore, He cannot be unrighteous. Since the Lord Jesus has shed His blood, God has to forgive all who believe in Him.

The Apostle Peter

In 1 Peter 1:18-19, the apostle Peter said, "Knowing that it was not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, that you were redeemed from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, but with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ." The Bible never says that sin is dealt with by the cross. The cross only deals with the old man. The Bible tells us that sin is dealt with by the precious blood of Christ.

The Apostle John

In 1 John 1:7-9 the apostle John said that the blood of Jesus the Son of God cleanses us from every sin. Our hearts are thoroughly wicked; even God cannot cleanse them. He can only cleanse us from our sins. In Swatow during our conference, a middle-age sister came to me one morning at six o'clock and

insisted that she had to see me. The sister was not a decent person. She was a widow and unbridled in her conduct. She was somewhat rich and had committed some uncommon sins. She came to me and said, "I have committed many sins, and my conscience is not at peace. I do not know if God will forgive me." I quoted 1 John 1:9 and told her that all sins can be forgiven. Whether she considered a sin to be pardonable or unpardonable, refined or crude, moral or immoral, as long as it was a sin, it was included in "our sins." Even if she could not give a name to a sin, it was included in "our sins" as well.

She answered, "But I am too evil. I am afraid that God cannot forgive me." I then spoke to her in an angry tone (of course, without any malice in my heart), "Do you know who you are doubting? You are doubting the faithful God. You are doubting the loving God. You are doubting the God who cannot lie. Do you know what a sin you have committed? All the sins that you have committed all your life could not add up to the sin that you have just committed. Doubting God and questioning His Word are the greatest sins that man can ever commit." She immediately turned from weeping into joy and said, "Then I know that God has indeed forgiven me." When I saw her exhilaration, I knew for the first time what it felt like for a person to turn from weeping to joy. The next morning she came again and said, "My sins are indeed forgiven. But there are many scars because of my sins. What should I do about these scars?" I said, "Read the second part of 1 John 1:9. It says that 'He is faithful and righteous to...cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' The blood of Jesus His Son can cleanse us of our sins to the extent that we feel as if we have never sinned. Since God has forgotten your sins, you should not remember your sins either. You should forget about your own sins, the sins of the brothers and sisters, and the sins of everyone else. Otherwise, you will be saying that you have a better memory than God."

In the last part of Revelation 1:5 John said, "Who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood." God washes away our sins and releases us from our sins by His own blood. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament show us that the blood deals with sins; it redeems us from sins and washes away our sins. The blood of Christ has been shed for us. God is righteous, and He must forgive those who come to Him through the blood of His Son. If anyone does not believe in this word, he is making God a liar (1 John 5:9-10). The greatest sin is to make God a liar. We should not doubt God's Word. When God says that our sins are forgiven and that we have been

sprinkled from an evil conscience, we should come to Him with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

GOD'S PROVISION MATCHING MAN'S NEED

After man fell, a twofold problem emerged: the sins of man and the man of sin. In God's way of salvation, the sins of man are dealt with by the blood, but the man of sin is too wicked. There is no way to save him; he is corrupted to the core. God can only deal with this problem by removing the old man. It is impossible to change the nature of our old man; even God cannot change it. We are rotten throughout. Just as a Cushite cannot change his skin and a leopard cannot remove its spots, the old man cannot be changed (Jer. 13:23). God's salvation must (1) remove our sins, (2) deal with our old man, and (3) give us a new man, which means that His Son, Christ, has to live within us. Once God's Son lives within man, it becomes easy for man to overcome sin. In fact, once God's Son lives within man, it will be as easy for man to live His life as it was for Him to live His own life on the earth.

THE OLD MAN BEING ABSOLUTELY INCURABLE

Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things /And it is incurable;/Who can know it?" Twelve years ago I was conducting a conference in Amoy. One day I was thirsty, and I went with my friend to buy some pears. Each of us bought two nice looking pears, but when we tried to eat them, we found that all four pears had worms inside. I quizzed my friend, asking, "Did the worms come from outside the pears or inside the pears?" He said, "They came from outside, of course." I said, "No, the worms came from inside. When the pear tree blossoms, worms lay their eggs in the flowers, and when the fruit grows, the eggs are already within the pears. When the pears ripen, the eggs hatch and the worms come out." This is what it means when the Lord says that sin proceeds from man's heart. The most ugly sins that the Lord mentions in the Gospels proceed from the heart (Mark 7:21-23). The relationship between sin and the sinner is like that between tuberculosis germs and tuberculosis itself. The cleansing away of our sins by the Lord's blood is like the removal of phlegm, whereas dealing with the old man is like treating the lung itself. In order to cure a man of tuberculosis, the infected

parts of the lungs must be removed. Similarly, in order to deal with the person who is totally corrupted, the old man must be dealt with.

GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION

Romans 6:7 tells us that a dead man is delivered from sin. We came into this world through birth. Hence, we can only be delivered from sin through death. We got into Adam through birth, and we get out of Adam through death. The cross means removal, and God removes our old man through the cross. God's unique way of removing the old man is for us to be crucified with the Lord. Only the cross has the power to remove the old man.

Let us now consider a few passages that speak of our relationship with the cross. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." This act was accomplished once for all. The meaning of the word "annulled" is to abandon or cut off. In the original language it means to be cut off from employment. Therefore, a more accurate translation can be "unemployed." When our old man is crucified with Christ, our body of sin is unemployed.

SIN, THE OLD MAN, AND THE BODY OF SIN

Sin, the old man, and the body of sin have the following relationships—sin is the master, the old man is the steward, and the body of sin is the slave. Sin is in the innermost part. The body is the outermost part. In between, there is the old man. Sin tempts, induces, and suggests from within. The old man in the middle consents, and the body outside is motivated to do the works. This is the way the three work together. In order for man to be delivered from sin, there are specific ways to deal with each of the three things. The world's way is to restrict the body and stop it from sinning. This only takes care of the outward body. Another so-called holiness group of believers suggests eradicating the root of sin from within man. They think that once the root of sin is removed, a man will no longer sin. But God's way, as revealed in the Bible, is to deal with the old man in the middle; it is to crucify the old man. Once the old man is crucified, the body is deprived of any power to transgress. Even when sin tries to tempt, induce, or make suggestions, the body will no longer respond. This is God's way of dealing with sin.

Every time man transgresses, he first experiences sin's instigation, then the old man's consent, and finally the evil acts of the body of sin. God's way of salvation is to crucify the old man. This causes the body of sin to be unemployed. By planting His own life in man, which is typified by the tree of life, He replaces the life of the old man and enables man to do God's will. In this way, when sin entices man to sin again, he will no longer succumb to its temptation, because the Lord's life is now living within man and He does not sin. Sin's temptations will never go away, but if the brain, eyes, mouth, and hands are not available for sin's employment, sin cannot do anything by itself. When the old man is crucified, the body of sin becomes unemployed. Once the old man is crucified, sin can no longer urge it to induce the body to commit sins. When the Lord crucified the old man, we were freed from our slavery to sin. The blood secures our salvation before God; it gives us a clear conscience and brings eternal life to us. This is objective and outward. At the same time, the cross secures our salvation before men; it deals with our heart and touches our living on this earth. It is subjective and inward.

Galatians 2:20 says that I have been crucified with Christ. The cross deals with the "I." Galatians 5:24 says, "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." This verse does not say that sin was crucified on the cross. What God crucified was our person and all we have. Man's way is to improve, cultivate, or mortify himself. But God's way is to deliver our old man to the cross. Once I went to a person's home and saw a child about to take a pair of worn shoes for repair. The mother said, "The shoes are too worn; they cannot be mended. Go and buy a pair of new shoes instead." This is the way God deals with our old man.

The full gospel tells us two things. First, it tells us that the Lord has cleansed us from all sins. Isaiah 1:18 says, "Come now and let us reason together,/Says Jehovah./Though your sins are like scarlet,/They will be as white as snow;/Though they are as red as crimson,/They will be like wool." All our sins are washed away by the precious blood of the Lord. Second, the full gospel tells us that God has crucified the old man, the one whom we cannot deal with by any other means. Our self has been annulled by the cross. Galatians 6:14 says that through the cross we have been crucified to the world. As far as I can remember, there are only four verses that speak of the relationship between the cross and "I"; they are Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20, 5:24, and 6:14.

IN CHRIST

Some may ask, "Christ was crucified two thousand years ago. How can I be crucified with Him?" First, we must realize that God never asks us to consider ourselves crucified. There are three hundred eighteen chapters of the New Testament. Not a single verse in all of these chapters says that we have to view our crucifixion with Christ through the eyes of our old man. Even the washing of our sins by the blood has nothing to do with us. We have not done anything. It is the Lord who shed the blood and washed away our sins. A man once said, "We should carry our sins to the blood and wash them clean in the blood." But thank the Lord, we do not have to bring our sins to be washed. God washed away our sins two thousand years ago. Once a man selected a hymn in a meeting. The first line said, "I laid my sins upon Jesus." All the missionaries in that meeting wanted to sing that song, but I said I would not sing it, because I could not lay my sins upon Jesus. Then an elderly missionary said, "Jehovah is the One who laid our sins upon Him. We cannot lay our sins upon Him ourselves." Eventually, the hymn was not sung that evening. I hope that it will never be sung again. We have to see that our sins are washed away by the precious blood of the Lord. We have absolutely no part in this washing.

Suppose one of our friends prays, "Lord, please shed Your blood for me. Please wash away my sins." God could not answer such a prayer. Such a prayer would not save him. We cannot pray a faithless prayer, and we cannot ask God to do something that He has already done. Similarly, if we say, "God, please crucify me," God could not answer such a prayer. God does not crucify us in ourselves. We have to realize that we are crucified with the Lord in Christ. Christ is the second man; we live in Christ, we are saved in Christ, we are forgiven in Christ, and we are crucified together in Christ.

Adam was the first man, and Christ is the second man (1 Cor. 15:47). In heaven there is only one man, and in hell there is also only one man. In heaven there is only Christ, and in hell there is only Adam. Everyone who is in Christ is in heaven, and everyone who is in Adam is in hell. The whole world equals only two men. Adam was the first man, and Christ is the second man and the last man. We were all in Adam, but we have been transferred into Christ. When I was in Kaifeng, I spoke to some government officials. One of them did not understand the meaning of being in Christ. I explained to him in the way of an illustration: "Most people believe that the Chinese race comes from Hwang-ti. When Hwang-ti fought with his enemy Tzi-you, suppose that

Tzi-you had not been killed, but that Hwang-ti had been shot to death by an arrow from Tzi-you. Where would you be today?" He said, "I would not exist." I said, "That is right. In the same way, you have died in Adam, and God has put you into Christ."

When I was in Chuenchow, a few brothers asked, "How can a man be crucified in Christ? Christ is Christ and we are we. In order for us to be crucified, there must be two crosses, His and ours." I said, "Suppose a pregnant woman sits down on a bus. She only needs to buy one ticket. Although there is a child within her womb, the child is included in the woman, and when the woman buys the ticket, the child buys it as well. In the same way, when we are in Christ, whatever is done to Christ is done to us. There is no need for us to be crucified."

Someone once asked why he felt that there were times when he was in Christ and times when he was out of Christ. I told him the story of a ten-year-old child whom I once met. The child's mother had been in Amoy over ten years ago. I asked the child, "Have you been to Amoy?" The child answered, "No." I asked again, "Really?" Then he changed his tone and said, "Yes, I have visited Amoy before. I did it in my mother's womb. I have not been there by myself, but within my mother, I have already visited that place." Through this example, he became clear.

DYING TO SIN IN CHRIST JESUS

Romans 6:11 says that in Christ we are dead to sin, but living to God. This verse does not say that in ourselves we are dead to sin and living to God; we are such when we are in Christ. If we look back at ourselves, we will find that our old man has not died. We have to say to the Lord: "I thank You. In You I am dead." Colossians 2:11 says, "In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." This verse refers to the circumcision of Christ, which we experience in Him. But how can we be circumcised in Him? We have to realize that the forgiveness of sins comes by faith, not by feeling or sight. Similarly, our circumcision in Christ and our death in Christ are based on faith. Therefore, Colossians 2:12 says, "Through the faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead." We are crucified with Him through faith. Hence, we have to go to the Lord and say, "Lord, You have said that we

are dead in You. I believe that whatever Your Word says will be accomplished."

BY FAITH

From the time I began to work for the Lord until 1927, I preached on the doctrine of co-crucifixion over a period of five years. Yet I really did not know how a person is crucified with Him. One day when I was in Shanghai, the Lord enlightened me and showed me that I am in Him, and that when He died, I also died. I saw that my death is as real as His death, because I was in Him when He died. I saw then that I was truly crucified with Christ. I was upstairs at the time. I ran down in joy and shouted in exhilaration, "Lord, I thank You. I praise You. I have been crucified with You." I saw it, I believed it, and I received it. A full salvation is not one that merely washes away our sins while leaving our old man behind. Thank God, in His full salvation, our sins are forgiven and our old man is crucified.

What is faith? The Bible speaks of one kind of faith only—the faith that believes that things have already been done. All the things that I have spoken of tonight will not do us any good if we do not have a living faith. Mark 11:24 says that when we believe that we have received a thing, we will have it. Believing that a thing will happen, must happen, or hopefully will happen does not constitute genuine faith. In our spiritual experience, there are two kinds of "having." One is the "having" in faith, and the other is the "having" in experience. There must first be a "having" in faith before there can be a "having" in experience.

Most people seek for healing in three ways: (1) for small illnesses, they consult themselves; (2) for more serious illnesses, they consult the doctors; and (3) for very serious illnesses, they consult the preachers. Those who consult preachers for healing in this way have nothing to do with faith at all. Such people hope that God will heal them, instead of believing that God has healed them. You only need to listen to one or two words from a person's mouth, and you can predict whether he will get better or worse. No prayers uttered in the way of a hope will receive any healing. Only prayers that issue from faith will produce experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WORD OF THE CROSS

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 2:

The Word of the Cross, Chap. 1

THE FACT, AIM AND RESULT OF THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE OLD MAN

When the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, not only did He die for the sinners, opening a living way for sinners to obtain eternal life and to come to God, He also died with the sinners on the cross. If the effectiveness of the cross were merely in the aspect of substitution so that sinners would have eternal life and be saved from perdition, God's way of salvation would not be complete. This is because a person who is saved by believing in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) still lives in this world; there are still many temptations. Moreover, the devil often cheats him, and the sinful nature within him operates continually. Although he has received salvation, he is not yet free from sin in this age. He does not have the power to overcome sin. Therefore, in His salvation the Lord Jesus had to accomplish both aspects: to save man from the punishment of sin and also to save man from the power of sin. When the Lord Jesus died for the sinners on the cross, He delivered man from the punishment of sin—the eternal fire of hell. When the Lord Jesus died with the sinners on the cross, He delivered man from the power of sin—the old man is dead, and man is no longer a slave of sin. Sin does not come from without but from within. If sin were to come from without, it would not have much power over us. Sin dwells in us. Therefore, it is deadly to us. Temptation comes from without, while sin dwells within. Since everyone in the world is a descendant of Adam, everyone has Adam's nature. This nature is aged, old, corrupted, and filthy; it is a nature of sin. Since this "mother" of sin is within man, when outside temptations come, that which is within responds to that which is without, and the result is the many sins. Because we have pride inside (though hidden at times), as soon as outside temptation comes, the opportunity to be proud comes, and we become proud. Because we have jealousy inside, as soon as outside temptation comes, we see others better than we are, and we become jealous. Because we have a quick temper inside,

as soon as outside temptation comes, we lose our temper. All the sins that man commits come from the old man within.

This old man is truly worthless, irreparable, unchangeable, incorrigible, and incurable. The way God deals with the old man is to crucify him. God wants to give us something new. The old man has to die. God's words charge us to wash away all of our sins in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin" (1 John 1:7). He "loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood" (Rev. 1:5). The sins here refer to the acts of sins committed by a person outwardly. The Bible never tells us that the old man within is to be washed. God's Word never says that the old man should be washed. (The blood of Jesus Christ washes our sins, not the old man.) The old man needs to be crucified. This is the word of the Bible.

God does everything in this age through the Lord Jesus Christ. He needs to punish sinners, yet He punished the Lord Jesus instead because the Lord Jesus stood in the position of and on behalf of sinners. God wants the old man to die, but He caused the Lord Jesus to die on the cross instead. By doing so, He brought all the sinners along with the Lord onto the cross. First there was a substituting death, then a participating death. This is the clear word of the Bible. Jesus Christ is the One who "died for all, therefore all died" (2. Cor. 5:14).

This point should be emphasized and should not be glossed over easily. A believer, that is, a saved one who confesses that he is a sinner and believes in Jesus, should remember that the crucifixion of his old man is not an independent activity apart from the Lord Jesus, but is done in union with the Lord Jesus. When the Lord Jesus died, our old man died together with Him and died in Him. This explains the failure of many people. Many times believers exercise their own strength to crucify their old man. However, they find out again and again that the old man is still alive. They try, mostly unintentionally, to crucify the old man independently by themselves without Christ. This can never be done. Unless one dies with the Lord Jesus, there is no crucifixion of the old man. The old man is crucified together with the Lord Jesus.

We do not die by ourselves; rather, we die together with the Lord. We were baptized "into His death" (Rom. 6:3); "we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death" (v. 5); "we have died with Christ" (v. 8); and "our

old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves" (v. 6). We cannot crucify ourselves and die. This "co-crucifixion" is an accomplished fact. It was accomplished when the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross. The death of the Lord Jesus is a fact; that the Lord Jesus died for us is also a fact, and our being crucified together with Him is also a fact. "Has been crucified," according to the original, is a continuous word; it is in the absolute perfect tense, which means that our old man's crucifixion with the Lord Jesus is an act that was accomplished once for all when the Lord died. But what is the result of dying with the Lord? What is the goal? We know from Romans 6:6 that the result is that the body of sin is annulled, and the goal is to make us no longer the slaves of sin. Let us use an illustration to explain this fact. There are three things: the old man, sin, and the body of sin. Sin is like a master, the old man is like a housekeeper, and the body is like a puppet. Sin does not have the authority and power to take over the body of sin or to direct it to sin. Sin directs the old man; when the old man consents to it, the body becomes the puppet. So while our old man is alive, it remains in the middle. The body is outside, and sin is inside. The sin within tempts the old man, and the lust of the old man is stirred up. This causes the old man to give the order to the body to sin and to engage in transgressions. The body is most pliable; whatever you tell it to do, it will do. It is something that has no dominion over itself. By itself, it cannot do anything; it can only act according to the order of the old man. When the Lord saved us, He did not put our body to death, nor did He destroy the root of sin. Rather, He crucified our old man with Himself on the cross.

What is the result of crucifying the old man? The result is "that the body of sin might be annulled." In the original Greek, "annulled" means "unemployed." This means that, without the old man, the body of sin cannot do anything anymore. Formerly, the body of sin functioned daily according to the old man's order. It seemed as if to sin had become its occupation. All it did was commit sins. The old man loved sin exceedingly; it wanted to sin, craved for sin, and was fond of doing sinful things; the body followed after the old man to sin and became the body of sin. Now, after the old man is dealt with by the Lord and is crucified, the body of sin becomes unemployed; there is no more work for it to do. When the old man was alive, it was the profession and the occupation of the body of sin to commit sins every day. Thank the Lord, this hopeless old man has been crucified! The body of sin has also lost its job!

Even though sin still exists and still tries to be the master, I am no longer its slave. Although time and again sin tries to instigate the body to commit sin, it cannot break through because the Holy Spirit has become the Master within the new man. As a result, sin is unable to activate the body to commit sin anymore. Hence, the goal of the crucifixion of the old man and the unemployment of the body of sin in Romans 6:6 is that "we should no longer serve sin as slaves."

EXPERIENCING DYING TOGETHER WITH THE LORD

We have seen these three items: one fact—"that our old man has been crucified with Him," one result—"that the body of sin might be annulled," and one goal—"that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." These three are linked together and cannot be separated. We know the fact, the result, and the goal. But how can we achieve this? What is the condition that we need to fulfill before we can have the experience of dying together with the Lord? It is to believe. There is no other condition except to believe.

The way one receives the substitutional death of the Lord Jesus is the same way he dies together with Him. Through faith, not works, one shares the result of the Lord Jesus' substitutional death, which is deliverance from eternal punishment. In the same way, through faith, one shares the result of dying with the Lord Jesus, which is freedom from sin. It is a fact that the Lord Jesus has already died for you. It is also a fact that you have already died with the Lord Jesus. If you do not believe in Christ's substitutionary death for you, you cannot partake of the effectiveness of this death—deliverance from punishment. If you do not believe in your death with Christ, you will likewise not be able to receive the effectiveness of death with Him—freedom from sin. All those who believe in the substitutional death of Christ are saved, and all those who believe in their death with Christ have overcome. To share in the death of the Lord Jesus—whether it be the substituting or the participating death—requires faith. God requires that we believe. We need to believe in the Lord's death for us and our death with Him. Romans 6:11 says, "So also you, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin." The word "reckon" is extremely important. Oftentimes we like to "sense" that our old man has died. We like to "feel" that our old man has died. If we try to sense or feel, our old man will never die in our experience. Our old man does not die from our "sensing" or

"feeling." The more we "sense," the more we notice that our old man is not dead, and the more we "feel," the more we see that our old man is still alive. The old man is not crucified by "sensing" or "feeling." The old man experiences crucifixion through "reckoning." What is reckoning? "Reckoning" is an act of faith; "reckoning" is the application of faith; "reckoning" is the judgment of the will and the execution of the will. "Reckoning" is completely contrary to "sensing" and "feeling." "Sensing" and "feeling" have to do with one's feelings, while "reckoning" has to do with faith and the will. Therefore, the crucifixion of our old man is not something we have to feel. It is wrong to say, "I do not feel that my old man is dead." Whether the old man has died or not does not depend on your feeling; it depends on whether or not you have reckoned it.

How do we "reckon"? To reckon yourself dead to sin is to reckon yourself already crucified. It is to reckon that your old man has already been crucified and that the cross of the Lord Jesus was also the cross for your old man; it is to reckon that the death of the Lord Jesus is the death of your old man and to reckon that the time the Lord Jesus died nineteen hundred years ago is the time your old man died. The old man has already been crucified on the cross with Christ. This is a fact, an accomplished fact. In the eyes of God, the old man is dead. Now we reckon that our old man is dead. If we reckon in our heart the things we believe in, God will accomplish the same things. Furthermore, we should exercise our will to reckon ourselves dead to sin. If we do this, we will no longer be a slave to sin. To reckon is an act as well as an attitude. An act is a one time matter, while an attitude is something one maintains all the time. An act is a one time action toward a certain matter, while an attitude is a lasting evaluation toward something. We should reckon ourselves dead to sin. This means that we should take a definite step to reckon ourselves dead to sin. After this, we should continually maintain an attitude of being dead to sin. The act is the beginning, and the attitude is the continuation. We should have at least one time before God where, in a definite way, from that very day and hour, we reckon ourselves as dead. After that specific reckoning, we should daily maintain this attitude of a definite reckoning, an attitude that declares ourselves dead to sin. The failure of many people is this: they have reckoned themselves dead to sin and have received the word of dying with the Lord on the cross. However, they think that this matter is once for all and that once they have made such a reckoning, they will have no problem from then on. They think that just as one is dead when his

physical body dies, so it is with the death of one's old man. They do not realize that the same is not true in the spiritual realm. We need to daily and hourly reckon ourselves dead with Christ. Whenever a believer stops reckoning, his old man, in experience, will not be dead. This is why many people find that their old man seems to have resurrected. If this is something that can be settled once for all, we do not need to be watchful anymore. But we know that we need to be watchful. Watchfulness is something we need to exercise moment by moment. In the same way, to reckon our old man dead is something that is continual and uninterrupted. If God's children are more aware of this, they will avoid many failures.

To take such an attitude is not a mental exercise of the mind, but a lasting evaluation of ourselves in our will. One should be able "to reckon oneself as dead" whether consciously or unconsciously. God's children often find it difficult to do this. Oftentimes, they think that they have "forgotten" to reckon. They have used the wrong organ. To reckon is an exercise of the will, not a grappling in the mind. Whether or not you overcome depends on whether or not you have adopted the attitude of reckoning yourself dead. It does not depend on whether or not you remember to reckon. If you exercise your will by the Holy Spirit to maintain this attitude of death, you will find that consciously or unconsciously this attitude will be with you. The attitude is always the same whether you remember it or not. Naturally, our mind has its place, but we should not let the mind influence the will. The will should control the mind and should cause it to assist the will in maintaining this attitude.

Therefore, daily and hourly, consciously or unconsciously, no matter what we do, we should always stand on the foundation of the cross and should reckon our old man as dead. Here is the secret to overcoming sin and the devil. Sin and the devil are related to each other. If sin cannot be our king, spontaneously the devil will not have any ground in our hearts.

If the believers realize and receive the truth of the cross, there will not be so many backsliding and failing ones. Long-lasting victory can never be separated from a long-lasting stand on the foundation of the cross.

However, this is not to say that, after we have "reckoned" the old man dead in conduct and in attitude, the sin within us will be eliminated and nullified. As long as we are still in the body, sin will still be with us. To say that sin can

be nullified in this life is not the teaching of the Bible. We can put our old man to death through trusting in the cross of the Lord on Golgotha, and we can cause the body of sin to be powerless, to wither, and to be paralyzed as dead; but we can never cause sin to be nullified. Whenever we are careless, unwatchful, and not standing on the death ground of Golgotha, our old man will be activated and will exercise its authority and power again. Satan is seeking an opportunity all day long to activate him. Wherever there is an opening, Satan will try to restore our old man to his original position.

This being the case, how we need to be watchful and on the alert so that the old man will never have a day to rise up again! But is not this very difficult? Surely the flesh regards this as difficult. Therefore, in order for the cross to work in the believers, they must have the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The cross and the Holy Spirit can never be separated. The cross makes it possible for the believers to overcome sin; the Holy Spirit makes real in the believers' lives what the cross has accomplished. A believer who wants to be delivered from sins must not make provisions for the flesh; he must be watchful and must be ready to pay any price. He should have less hope in himself and more trust in the Holy Spirit. With man it is impossible; with God, nothing is impossible.

The death of the cross is different from any other kind of death. This kind of death is most painful and slow. Therefore, if we truly reckon ourselves dead and take the cross of the Lord as our own cross, it will be painful and miserable as far as our flesh is concerned. The Lord Jesus hung on the cross for six hours before He died; His death was very slow. In the lives of Christians, the experiences of co-crucifixion belong often to this six-hour period. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, He had the power to come down if He desired. The same is true for those who are crucified with the Lord. Whenever one allows his old man to leave the cross, his old man will leave the cross. The old man is hung on the cross through one's reckoning. If one maintains the attitude that the old man is dead, the old man will be as powerless as the dead. But once a person relaxes, the old man will be activated. Many of God's children often wonder why their old man keeps resurrecting. They forget that the death of crucifixion is slow.

Satan is very alert; he takes any opportunity to resurrect the old man and to cause the believers to commit sin. Whenever we are not watchful, his temptation and deception come. When outward temptation and deception

come, the old man within is quick to respond. At such times, we should come back once again to the foundation of the cross and should once again reckon ourself dead. We should wait (through this reckoning) for the Holy Spirit to apply the power of the cross until the temptation loses its drawing power. Every believer should have this extraordinary experience. When we are about to be defeated, we should come again to the cross and reckon ourself dead; by this we will experience power coming into us, preserving us, and strengthening us to resist the temptation. However, is it not true that sometimes we reckon over and over again and still do not see any result, but instead we sin? This is the experience of many. This means that our "reckoning" has some problem. If we have truly reckoned, we will surely find extraordinary power coming into us. We should remember that this "reckoning" is not to say with our mouth, "I am dead, I am dead"; neither is it to think in the mind, "I am dead, I am dead." It is the judgment of our will to reckon ourself dead and to maintain this attitude of reckoning with a believing heart. We may say that this is a decision in our will by which we declare, "I am dead." In other words, first we are willing to die, then we reckon ourself dead. We need to learn to reckon with the will and with faith.

If we really stand on Romans 6:11, we will constantly have the experience of being free from sin. When a believer first takes this attitude, Satan will purposely try to stir up a storm and will cause the believer to feel that things are too much for him to handle. At such times, he should calmly rely on the Holy Spirit to apply to him the power of the cross. Do not struggle. Do not be anxious. Do not think that the temptation is too great, and do not encourage the enemy because of this. You should reckon yourself dead to sin. The cross has the power to overcome the world.

If unfortunately we fail, we should rise up even more and should trust more in the power of the cross. The Holy Spirit will lead us to victory in the Lord Jesus. Brothers, "sin will not lord it over you, for you are...under grace"! (Rom. 6:14).

CHAPTER SIX

THE LIFE-RELEASING DEATH OF CHRIST

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 42:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (2), Chap. 54

Scripture Reading: Luke 12:49-50; John 12:24; 14:16-20; 2 Cor. 5:16

THREE ASPECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

There are three aspects of the death of Christ. There is the aspect of His substitution for us, the aspect of His identification with us, and the aspect of His releasing His life for us. All three aspects of His death are needed in order to make God's way of redemption complete. If we only had one of these three aspects, we might feel insecure and might think that God's salvation was not trustworthy or complete. We might feel that God's salvation is like the light in this room tonight, flickering and dimming intermittently. All three aspects of the Lord's death are important. First, there is the Lord's blood. His blood speaks of His death as a substitution for us; He shed His precious blood on our behalf. Second, the Lord's death on the cross speaks of His identifying death. We do not have any part in the shedding of His blood, but we can have a part in His cross, because when the Lord went to the cross, He brought us along with Him. We have to know what the Bible says, and we also have to know what the Bible does not say. The Bible says that we have been crucified with Christ, but it does not say that we have participated in the shedding of His blood. We cannot say that we have a part in the shedding of Christ's blood, but we can definitely say that we have been crucified with Him on the cross.

Third, the Lord's flesh refers to the aspect of His death that released His life. This aspect of the Lord's death has nothing to do with God or man. It refers to His flesh being given for the world. The Lord released His own life. The flesh signifies the Lord's life, the life released through the Lord Jesus' death. This is why it speaks of His flesh, not His corpse. The Lord Jesus was God. Yet He came to the earth, putting on a body of flesh and having the life of man. In order for Him to release His life, He first had to put off His human physical life. In Luke 12:49-50 He said, "I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how

I wish that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!" The word "pressed" means "constricted" in the original language. "Fire" does not refer to a physical fire that is lit by a match or any other kind of fire. The expression "cast fire on the earth" proves that this fire is not from the earth, but from heaven. The book of Hebrews says that our God is a consuming fire (12:29). Here fire signifies God's life, which is the life of Christ.

The Lord wanted to see all men filled with His fire, that is, His life. But when the Lord spoke these words, they had not received His life yet. Therefore, He said, "I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled!" Following this He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with." This is a strange word. Was not the Lord already baptized? He was baptized in Luke 3; it had been done already. He had been baptized at least three years earlier. Why did He say that He had a baptism to be baptized with? We have to realize that baptism in this verse refers to His death on the cross. The meaning of baptism is death and burial. It was right to say that the Lord still had "a baptism to be baptized with." This meant that the matter had not been consummated. At that time, the Lord had not passed through death, signified by baptism.

CHRIST'S LIFE-RELEASING DEATH

God's life originally filled the whole universe. But after Christ was incarnated, it was limited by His flesh and was bound. God had no way to dispense His life to men. First, His life entered the flesh of the Lord Jesus. The Lord's aspiration was to put off His body through the consummation of His baptism so that He could dispense His life to men. Luke 12:49 and 50 are the two most precious verses in the New Testament. At that time the Lord's baptism had not yet been consummated, and although the twelve disciples were very close to Him, they could not obtain any life from Him. This is why we say that the third aspect of the Lord's death has nothing to do with God or man; it was His own aspiration for the release and liberation of His life. We can see this even more clearly from John 12:24, which says, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." The death of the grain of wheat has nothing to do with sin. Neither does it have anything to do with identification. The death of the grain of wheat is a life-releasing death. Life is in the grain of wheat, but this life is surrounded by the shell. If you put a grain of wheat on the table, nothing will

ever happen; it will forever remain as one grain. It has to be planted in the ground, allowing the shell to break, fall off, and decay through the action of water. Only then will life sprout forth, take root downward, and branch and grow upward. After two or three months, a hundred grains will be produced. Each of the grains will be impregnated with life, and the life within each grain will be derived from the one grain.

In the same way, when the only begotten Son of God died, millions of God's sons were produced. Before the Lord's incarnation, God's life was abstract and untouchable. After the Lord was born, God's life was locked in the flesh. However, the Lord went to Golgotha and was crucified on the cross. This released God's life. God's original intention was for His only begotten Son to become the firstborn Son so that He could have many sons. Through the death of the only begotten Son, His life was released, and this life produced many sons. The one grain has become a hundred grains. There are now one plus one hundred grains. Originally, the one grain was unique. Now it has become the first of many grains. Before the Lord's resurrection, God had only one Son. After the Lord's resurrection, God had many sons. Before His resurrection, Christ was God's only begotten Son. After His resurrection, Christ was God's firstborn Son. The Lord told Mary on the day of His resurrection of "My Father and your Father" (John 20:17). Originally, the Father was only the Father to Christ. We were not able to call God our Father. Hallelujah! After Christ was crucified on Golgotha and after His resurrection, He was no longer just the only begotten Son of God; He became the firstborn Son of God. Hebrews 2:11 says, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers." Just as the Lord Jesus received His life from God, we have received our life from God. Our life is the same as His.

ANOTHER COMFORTER

Now we come to another problem. How does God dispense His life to us? We have to read John 14:16-20: "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you. Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me,

and I in you." The word "another" means that there was one already, and that this one is now another. The first Comforter was Christ. The second Comforter is the Holy Spirit. The word "comforter" is *paracletos* in the original language; it means a helper. The prefix para means to be alongside, just as the words parallel lines mean two lines that are alongside one another. This can be seen from two railway tracks which run alongside one another. Being parallel means maintaining the same distance all the time and being alongside all the time. God has given us a second Comforter, who will be alongside of us forever and help us all the time.

The word "another" also means another in kind, and not just another in number. Another Comforter does not mean the same kind of comforter. The kind that the disciples knew could die and leave them; He could not be with them forever. But the other kind would not be the same as this kind; the other Comforter would be with them forever. Verse 17 tells us who the other Comforter is. The other Comforter is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him. Hence, it was impossible for the world to receive Him. The other Comforter was different from the Lord, because the other One could be with us forever. John 14:17 reveals the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Lord could be present with men, but His presence was outward; it was not the kind of presence depicted in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the Lord is present within man; He brings His presence into man. Indeed, this is the real gospel! You and the Lord were two persons. But now you and He have become one, because He is present within you.

THE LORD BEING THE HOLY SPIRIT

The most mysterious part of this portion of the Word lies in the pronoun He in verse 17, which is changed to the pronoun I in verse 18. Why is this? Please remember that the He is the I and the I is the He. The Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit. I am not denying the doctrine of the Trinity. I am merely saying that the Lord Himself says that He is the Holy Spirit. Today the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit. This is like me saying, "A certain man is traveling to Pu-Chien-Ding to preach." Then I may go on to say, "I am preaching in Pu-Chien-Ding." What does this mean? This clearly means that the "He" in the first sentence is the "I" in the second sentence. Hallelujah! The Lord Jesus is now the Holy Spirit. Paul said that from now on he would no longer know

Christ according to the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16). When the Lord Jesus was incarnated and put on flesh, He was immediately limited by time and space. Suppose the Lord was still in the flesh today, He would not be able to be in Tien-An Chapel if He was in the Savior's Church. If He was in the meeting in Ho-si Street, He could not be in the meeting behind the football field. If He was in London, He could not be in New York. If He was with the three disciples, He could not be with the other nine. If He was with the twelve disciples, He could not be with the other fifty-eight disciples. If He was with the seventy disciples, He could not be with the one hundred and twenty disciples. If He was with the one hundred and twenty, He could not be with the five hundred.

If the Lord was in Jerusalem, Christians would have to save money to make a pilgrimage once every three or five years to Jerusalem to see Him, just as Muslims make pilgrimages to Mecca. But today the Lord is no longer in the flesh. Before His death, He was in the flesh. He put on a human body in the same way that a man puts on a garment. But after His death, He put off the body of flesh and put on the Holy Spirit. The Lord has put off the flesh and put on the Holy Spirit. Today He is in the Holy Spirit. This is why He can be in us. I have often pondered the completeness of God's salvation. It is so complete that He Himself has become available to us. Today the Lord is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is omnipresent. Therefore, we can all receive Him. In Acts 2 the apostle Peter quoted the last verse of Joel 2, saying, "And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v. 21). Paul even said that the Lord is near us, in our mouth and in our heart (Rom. 10:8). Please remember that the Lord can be such because He is in the Spirit. This is why He can be omnipresent today. John 14:18 says, "I am coming to you." This does not refer to His future coming, which will be visible; rather, it refers to His coming in the Spirit. Today the Lord has come to us in the Spirit, and He is even dwelling within us.

KNOWING CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Some regret that they were born too late. They think that it would be wonderful if they had been born two thousand years ago because they could have seen Jesus. But I tell such ones that I would not exchange places with Peter even if I could. Although I am quite insignificant, I can say humbly that I know much more than Peter. Peter only knew a Christ in the flesh. But I know the Lord who lives within me. When I was in Europe, I passed through

the Mediterranean Sea and was approaching Egypt. A friend invited me to visit the holy land, but I declined the invitation. I asked myself, "Can a man increase his knowledge of Christ by visiting Golgotha, the garden of Gethsemane, or Sychar? No! Absolutely not!" That was why I declined to go. Paul said, "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him so no longer" (2 Cor. 5:16). Today we do not know Christ according to the flesh or outward appearance, but according to spirit.

Romans 8 tells us clearly that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ have nothing to do with Christ (v. 9). Who are the sons of God? They are those who have become God's many sons through His unique begotten Son. God has neither female nor male offspring. We can be His sons today because we are in His Son. We become the many sons in His Son. All of God's children in the Bible are male. Second Corinthians 6:18 does say that God is our Father and that we are His sons and daughters. But this verse does not speak of our position in Christ. This is why it says "sons and daughters," not "sons." In Christ there is no male or female. In Christ we are all sons of God, and we have all received the life of God's Son. Hallelujah! The life of God's Son within us has made us His many sons. The life within the sisters is the same as the life within the brothers.

John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name." Receiving refers specifically to receiving God's life; it does not refer to sinners receiving Christ as Savior for their salvation. Rather, it refers to sinners receiving God's life to become His children. This verse has been borrowed by many for a long time and has been misused for a long time. Tonight we have to claim it back.

Let us summarize what we have covered tonight. The blood and the cross deal with man as a sinner, whereas the flesh deals with man as a man. The Lord's blood deals with sin. This is before God and it is a vicarious work of the Lord. It is objective, and it is for cleansing, forgiveness, and justification. It deals with the negative things, and we receive it through believing. The cross deals with the old man. It is something done within man, and it is the Lord's identification work. It is subjective, and it is for removing and cutting off the flesh. It also deals with negative things, and it is accomplished through our believing. These two items remove all the barriers. Finally, the Lord's flesh deals with the person; it is for the dispensing of life. It is something done

within man, through which the Lord releases His life. It is subjective, and it is for liberation, supply, sustenance, and reproduction. It is on the positive side, and we receive it also through believing. It is for the accomplishing of God's purpose. We must learn to thank and praise the Lord even more, because all of God's works have been accomplished. Tomorrow night we will talk about the way to receive Christ's life in a subjective way.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FOUR ASPECTS OF THE LORD'S DEATH

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 46:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (6), Chap. 192

Scripture Reading: Exo. 12:13; Rom. 6:6, 11

The imparting of life was not an afterthought on the part of God. God did not desire to impart the divine life to man only after the fall. This thought was in His very heart from the beginning. Even before the fall, God wanted to give His Son to man. God's eternal purpose is for there to be a race of beings who can share His uncreated life. He offered His life to Adam in the form of the tree of life before sin ever came in. Adam was innocent, being neither sinful nor holy. He was a man living by his natural life; he was a living soul. When sin came in, Adam and God were separated. Adam was afraid of meeting God. There was a need for redemption only after sin came in. Before the fall man's need could have been supplied by simply receiving life. But instead of receiving life, he chose something else. When sin came in, God had to do something in addition to His original purpose. Redemption is not an end in itself, but it is a necessary means to reach God's end because of sin.

The work of the Lord Jesus was twofold: (1) bringing about the purpose of God, and (2) bringing about the redemption of man. The latter aspect was remedial. The death of the Lord Jesus was not just remedial in nature. It also included a positive aspect quite apart from the matter of sin. Remedially, it dealt with what man had brought in, and positively, it carried out the original purpose of God.

There are four aspects of the Lord's death. Two of these four aspects are for the undoing of the devil's work and man's sin, and two are for the bringing about of God's purpose. These four aspects include: (1) the blood for remedy, (2) the crucifixion for remedy, (3) the flesh for God's purpose, and (4) the bearing of the cross for God's purpose.

What is man's need? As soon as disobedience came in, the question of guilt had to be addressed. Because of guilt, God and man became separated. A

blockage came between them, and this gives Satan ground for attacking. Therefore, there is a need to have that guilt—the ground of attack and condemnation—removed so that man can be brought back into full fellowship with God. Before Adam sinned, he was a natural man; after the fall he became "the old man." We not only have "products" on the street, we also have a "factory" of sin. Sins have to be done away with so that there is no case before God, and I—the factory which produces the sins—also have to be done away with so that there will be no more cases! First, the blood is for sins. Second, the cross is for me. Third, the flesh releases His life into me (which was represented by the tree of life). Fourth, the bearing of the cross is the working of death that keeps the natural life or soul-life in its proper place.

THE BLOOD

The blood is toward God, man, and Satan. Primarily, the blood is for God, not for man. It is required by God, but if we do not realize the value of the blood to God, we will not realize its value to us. In the Old Testament the blood is mentioned over four hundred times, and in each case, it is always for God Himself. On the day of Atonement the blood was sprinkled before the Lord seven times, and no man except the high priest, typifying the Lord Jesus, was allowed to draw near to the Lord. In Egypt the blood was smeared on the outside of the door for God to see; those who were in the house could not see it. The life is in the blood, and God requires blood to satisfy His righteousness. The blood was God's portion and was never allowed to be eaten. Sometimes we feel our sins are more real than the blood, yet we have to accept God's valuation. We have to believe that the blood is precious to God. If God accepts it for our redemption, then we can believe that the debt is paid. First John 1:7 says, "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin." In the business world, if I pay a debt, the one to whom I pay the money has to see that the money is good! If God says the blood is enough to satisfy His requirements, then it must be. Our valuation of the blood must be in accordance with His valuation. The result will be that our hearts will be purified from an evil conscience (Heb. 9:14). (The blood cleanses our conscience, not our hearts.) We know how important it is to have a clear conscience, because without this we are unable to believe. If our conscience condemns us, faith leaks out. The temptation to many is to think they must live up to what they regard as God's standard before they can come with confidence to God. But the blood is the way of access, and our approach is always with boldness because it has nothing to do with our attainment or holiness. The blood is the only thing that

is needed; it is absolutely sufficient. The first time we came to the Lord, we were made near by the blood, and every subsequent time that we come to Him, we are made near by the blood. Penance will not make our approach any easier. The blood is our only plea. Since our conscience is cleansed before God we have "no more conscience of sins." From this ground we can face the enemy and all of his efforts to bring us under condemnation. The blood puts God on our side, and we can be fearless. The fall brought in something which gave Satan some footing. Furthermore, man was put outside the garden, and God was outside of man. The blood restores us to God and God to us.

The blood of the Lord Jesus cleanses us not only from sin but from every sin. As He is in the light, we can walk in the light, and the blood will cleanse us from every sin—those which we think are unforgivable and even those which we are not conscious of. It is only as our conscience is clear that we can overcome Satan. His attacks are based on his accusations, and if we accept these accusations we will go down. Why do we come under his accusations and believe them? It is because we still hope to have some righteousness of our own. We often may be disappointed in ourselves, but God is never disappointed with us because He expects nothing from us! If we accept God's verdict that no good thing dwells in us, and judge ourselves to be worthy of nothing but death, and if we see that the blood more than pays every time, Satan will have no ground of attack. Our attitude only will be, "Lord, I cannot hope to be any better, but Your blood is always sufficient."

THE CROSS

The Lord also died so that we might die. As the last Adam, the representative of the whole Adamic creation, He gathered every son of Adam into Himself, and in His death He brought the whole race to an end as far as God was concerned.

Note the order in Romans 6. We know and then we are able to reckon. With some there is an undue emphasis on "reckon" in verse 11, suggesting that we must reckon in order to produce the death which we must have, and that it all begins with us. But the Lord included us in His death. He has done something, and we are included in His crucifixion. The order is: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him...reckon yourselves to be dead." We do not reckon in order to be dead. When we see that we are dead, we are in the position to witness to it by baptism. What is the most common thing to do

with a dead body? Bury it! (Some use burial as a means to die. We should never be baptized unless we have seen we have died. Our burial is our answer to the death on the cross; everything is based on this. Unless we see this as a basis, everything we do will be in the nature of works.) Baptism is not a testimony of our faith in Christ for our salvation, but a revelation of our union with Him in death and resurrection. God included us in the death of His Son so that we could be identified with Him "in Christ." "Of Him you are in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:30). God put us into Christ just as I might put a piece of paper into a book. Our old man has been crucified. We can look in vain for any reference to future crucifixion. Now it is a matter of faith. The secret of reckoning is the revelation of what the Lord has already done. It is not reckoning toward death, but reckoning from the fact of death. The way to reckon is to be in Christ Jesus.

The two remedial aspects of the Lord's death—removing our sins before God and removing ourselves from us—deal with everything that came in with Adam. Through these two aspects, man is brought back to Adam's state before the fall.

THE FLESH

In Genesis we have Adam, Eve, and the rib (2:18-19, 21-24). In Ephesians we have Christ, the church, and the water (5:23, 25-27, 29-32). In John we have water, blood, and the side (19:34).

God wants more than a remedy for what came in with Adam, He wants to have a race into whom He can impart His own life. For them to have His very life and to be one with Him in life is the only thing that will satisfy Him. It is the only thing that will defeat any possible uprising of the enemy.

Ephesians 5 is the only chapter which tries to explain Genesis 2, and in Ephesians we also have something rather peculiar. We have been taught that we are sinners and need salvation, but God wants more than just a remedy for what came in with Adam. He wants a people who possess His own life. We have thought that saved sinners are the church, but saved sinners as such are not the church, because they bring in something negative from the past. The church is the Body of Christ: "The church which is His Body." Sin is not mentioned in connection with it. Christ has to have a Body which can express His life. In Ephesians we have one aspect of His death which is quite different

from other places in the Scripture. The "love" that is spoken of in Ephesians 5 is the love of a husband for a wife, not the love of Christ for sinners. It is the church which is in view and not sinners. Paul uses Genesis 2 to illustrate the point. If our eyes are opened to this we will certainly worship. In the Old Testament we have many types of the death of the Lord, but in Ephesians 5 Paul used only the one in Genesis 2. This is the one type which has nothing to do with sin because it was before sin came in. Adam was not put to sleep because someone had done something wrong; he was put to sleep in order that something might be taken out of him and be made into someone. The creation of Eve was in view when a rib was taken out of him. This aspect of the Lord's death has nothing to do with atonement or remedy. This aspect is for the purpose of creating the church for the bringing in of the Body for the expression of His own life. Eve is a type of the church. Adam was put to sleep. This aspect of the death of the Lord relates to sleep. Christians sleep; we do not die. Whenever death is mentioned, sin is in the background. Adam's sleep refers to a death with no sin in it. It came before Genesis 3, before the introduction of sin.

Eve was taken out of Adam. She was not a separate creation. Eve is a type of the church taken out of the body of the last Adam to be His bride. Putting it another way, God is seeking to turn His only begotten Son into the Firstborn among many brothers. He is seeking to turn a grain of wheat into many grains. God's heart's desire is to have many sons.

John 19:34 speaks of a pierced side and of blood and water. The blood speaks of the atoning death of Christ, and the water speaks of the life released by the non-propitiating aspect of His death. It came from His side, His heart. God's purpose is that we should all share His life.

The blood came in to blot out sins, whereas the cross came in to blot out us. Furthermore, we were not created to be redeemed. Redemption was only necessary to bring us back to the eternal purpose of God, which is sonship—the sharing of God's life. The Lord Jesus brought us back to God's purpose by His death, and in His death He released His life. In accepting the Lord Jesus, we receive something which Adam never had! For Adam never had the life of God as represented by the tree of life.

John 12 and Luke 12 make it clear that there is an aspect of death which is only for the release of life. One alone had God's life, and He had to die in

order to release His life. There was life in the grain of wheat, but it had to die in order to produce many grains. The death of the first grain is not to propitiate for the other grains but to produce them.

Luke 12:50 says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!" The Lord was pressed, squeezed, and held up. What was the way out? "I have a baptism to be baptized with." The Lord had to release Himself by death so that we could receive Him. He said He came to send fire on the earth, that is, the fire of the Holy Spirit, so that all might have His Spirit in them. Christ is not only with us but in us.

There is another aspect of the flesh. In the eating of the Passover lamb, the blood was for God and the flesh was for the household. The blood was not to be eaten; it was for God to see. But under the blood we need to take the flesh to prepare for the wilderness, so that we might have the strength to go out. In the Levitical offerings the flesh was always meant for the priests and Levites. John 6 puts the emphasis on the flesh, not on the blood. Of the four instances in which the flesh and the blood are spoken of together, the flesh is spoken of first. In these four instances, "eat" is spoken of first, not "drink"; the emphasis is on the flesh. The flesh in this chapter is something positive, "And the bread which I will give is My flesh, given for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

Bread is something related to the purpose of God, whereas blood is related to the remedy of God. We always talk about the Lord's supper as the breaking of bread, not as the drinking of the cup. The bread is always put before the wine because the bread is according to the purpose of God, whereas the wine is remedial. The flesh includes the blood. If there had been no blood on the door, there could have been no flesh in the house.

The Lord said, "So he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (John 6:57). To "live because of Me" means to live on account of Me. Do we know anything of this? Outside of Him we have no life, we cannot do anything. He is always trying to strip us and put us in difficult situations so that we can learn to live by Him. Some of us have a keen mind and brain, and we have never learned the lesson that we cannot understand God's Word without God. He has to strip us of our wisdom, our mental powers, our keen brain, etc. Then we can learn to live by Him and because of Him. We have to take life from Him even for our body. We live because of Him. The Lord drew the parallel, by saying, "As...I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he

also shall live because of Me." God does not give us power to be strong; rather, the Lord's life in us makes us strong. Difficulties multiply for the sole purpose of stripping us of our own resources. When we are put into hopeless situations, we ask for the situations to be removed. But the Lord wants us to learn, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). Our grace is not sufficient, but "My" grace is sufficient. Paul was always weak. The Lord has to bring us to a place where we say, "Lord, I simply cannot exist." A brother once said, "The Lord is always trying to knock the bottom out from under me." Through one experience after another we learn to live by the Lord. When the Lord puts us into the most difficult situations, we may try to meet them, but eventually we are brought to the place where we cannot do anything about them. Our attitude should be, "I cannot; therefore, I am not going to try. I refuse to do anything about it. Lord, You must do it for me." In this way we can learn to live by Him. It is He who has done it, and as we multiply this experience, daily it becomes our life attitude. God's life is not merely a parcel or a sum of capital. First John 5:12 says, "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." The life is in the Son and nowhere else; it cannot be possessed apart from Him. If we have a proper relationship to the living Lord, His life will become ours automatically.

There are people who believe that all of our salvation and holiness lie in the blood. Some go further and believe that God will deliver us from the old man. There are others who feel that we must consecrate ourselves to the Lord. We must have the blood, our old man must be dealt with on the cross, and we must give ourselves over to the Lord to produce in us what He wants. Our attitude should be, "Lord, I trust You to create in me whatever I need and to be whatever I need." Faith brings Him in. Faith says, "Lord, I cannot do it; be to me whatever I need."

First Corinthians 1:30 tells us that Christ Jesus is made unto us all that we need. He is our patience, etc. God does not give us a dose of sanctification. Holiness is simply the Lord living His holy life in us. We must believe this. The secret is not trying but trusting. The difference between trying and trusting is the difference between heaven and hell! We say, "Lord, I cannot; therefore, I will not try. I trust You to do this." This is drawing our life from Him. It is not passivity, because it involves active cooperation and faith.

THE BEARING OF THE CROSS

The fourth aspect of Christ's death is allowing the cross to be the ruling principle of our life, daily allowing it to undercut our natural life and power (Matt. 10:34-39; Mark 8:32-35; Luke 17:32-34; John 12:24-26; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; Phil. 3:10). In this way the natural life and power will not act according to itself or assert itself. In order to touch the very core of our problem, we must deal with the question of the soul. In this way the dying or killing of the Lord Jesus will release and manifest His life in us.

The Lord has taken great care to show us that we can live only by His life. Trials and difficulties are brought in to prove this point to us. The real meaning of the Christian life is nothing less than Christ. He is the life.

What does it mean to live under law? It means that God demands something from us and we try to do it. What does it mean to live under grace? It means that God still demands something, but Christ does it in us. This life is not an end in itself, but a means to fully secure God's purpose.

We need to distinguish between the "old man," the sin producer, and the soul, that is the natural power and ability to act according to one's self independent of God. Self is not necessarily sinful, but it always stands apart from the will of God. There are times when the self is quite righteous, almost holy! If our sins and our "old man" have been dealt with, we are back to where Adam was before the fall. Our problem then becomes Adam's original problem—the problem of the soul acting independent of God.

What is the soul? Jesus Christ was a sinless man, but He had a separate personality from God: "I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30). The real significance of the Lord's temptation was Satan's efforts to make Him act according to Himself and thus relinquish His complete dependence upon God. When man acts according to himself, that is the soul. "The Son can do nothing from Himself" (John 5:19). This means that nothing originated from Him. The matter of the soul is not related to sins as such; it is related to independence—something we do without the help of God. The danger for us is that we can live by our own power: "I can plan, and I can decide." Therefore, God shows us another aspect of the cross which deals with the soul through the bearing of the cross daily.

We need to distinguish between the two sides of the cross: (1) the crucifixion of the cross which dealt with the flesh, and (2) the bearing of the

cross, which deals with the self in a daily process. This second aspect of the cross deals with the soul. The cross is brought to bear on the soul so that the mold of death, the mark of the cross, is constantly conforming the soul into subjection to the Spirit.

Matthew 10:37-39 indicates that the soul is the seat of our affections. Many actions and decisions are influenced by our affections. As a consequence, the Lord said, "He who loves father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me," and "He who loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it." We have to lose our soul-life. This means that we cannot fulfill its wishes. We have to ignore what the soul is asking for. Some secret love may cause us to deviate from our course of fully following the Lord.

In Mark 8:32-35 Peter said to the Lord, in effect, "Have mercy upon Yourself!" The Lord's reply was a strong rebuke. The soul's desire is self-preservation; but in order to go on with God, we have to go against ourselves. Are we afraid of the will of God? Do we like the will of God? Miss Barber once said, "Lord, I am willing to break my heart so that I can have Your heart." When there is no mixture of soul and spirit, and everything is out from the Spirit, then God's will is all, and we will shed no tears in sympathy for our soul-life!

The soul-life is occupied by the things of the earth (Luke 17:32-34). What will be our reaction to the claims of our home, the interests of our service, etc.? If we are living according to the soul-life, our reaction will not be proper.

Fruitfulness comes from the loss of our soul (John 12:24-26). What part of us must be lost before there can be "much fruit"? The soul! There is so little expression of the life within us because the power of the soul is wrapping and enveloping it. We are living, doing, and acting out from ourselves. The cross must come in before the soul-life can be lost. Verse 25 is in connection with the losing of the soul. In times of temptation, the self wants to resist, but any victory won on this basis is a counterfeit victory. Only what the Lord does in us is real deliverance. Our attitude should be: "Lord, I cannot do anything. Therefore, I will not try to do anything. Lord, You do it."

This dredging up of the natural life begins with a definite crisis. Some souls are stronger than others. But the Lord must come in to break all of them until no self-confidence is left. As long as there is anything for us to confide in, we

will have self-confidence. This is why God must dredge up all the ground of self-confidence. Brokenness is only possible when we lose our self-confidence. Moses was once "powerful in his words and works" (Acts 7:22). Yet he had to be brought to the place where he confessed, "I am not eloquent" (Exo. 4:10). Those whose soul-lives have been dealt with by the cross are marked by a spirit of fear and trembling. They are certain of nothing but the Lord, and they walk very softly with Him.

We cannot know Him and the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10) unless we are willing to allow the stamp of death—the cross—to be sealed to our soul-life. We must be brought to the place where we have no confidence in our self. This is a life process, a daily taking up of the cross. All self-trust must go.

Any teaching on holiness or victory is inconsequential unless the self, the soul-energy, is first dealt with. The Lord is after utter dependence. He does not want anyone to act independently of Him. He is not asking us to do something for Him. God is the only Doer, the only Originator. Our part is simply to concur. We can do nothing else.

We must know His death in its fullness in all four aspects. In the cross we see God's true estimate of us. We are only fit for death; therefore, we should not even try to please God. This is not passivity; it is active faith. We refuse to live out from our self. We choose to live in complete dependence upon God, and we will allow the cross to do an ever deeper dredging work in us so that we will be "conformed to His death."

CHAPTER EIGHT

CIRCUMCISION AND THE CROSS

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 8:

The Present Testimony (1), Issue No. 18

Scripture Reading: Col. 2:10-13; Gen. 17:1, 9-14, 22-23

We have read Colossians 2:11: "In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." This verse makes us realize one thing: Christians are circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands. This is to say that one portion of the inheritance in Christ is the circumcision in Christ. In order that no one miss the meaning of circumcision, we should turn to Genesis 17 where the matter of circumcision was first mentioned in the Bible. If we understand what is there, we will understand Colossians 2:11.

Before speaking of circumcision, we need to know some history about Abraham. In Genesis 17, Abraham was ninety-nine years old (v. 1). Prior to this, before he was eighty-six years old, God promised Abraham that he would be granted a son. Not only would he have a son, but he would be a father of a nation as well. Abraham, knowing that he was becoming old and that Sarah was past the age of child-bearing, did not have the slightest hope. Therefore, Sarah suggested that he take Hagar as a concubine. They wanted to help God with their flesh, thinking that by so doing they could bring forth a son. Abraham took Sarah's word, and at the age of eighty-six, he brought forth a son, Ishmael (16:16). In this situation, what did God do? God did not want man to act in this way. God did not want Abraham and Sarah to help by the flesh. Since they depended so much on the flesh, God left them in the cold. During a period of thirteen years, from eighty-six to ninety-nine years of age, there was nothing worth recording, that is, Abraham had no fellowship with God. Abraham, at the age of eighty-six, still had the strength to do something; by the age of ninety-nine, he had no more strength. There was no more hope. God brought him to such a point before He came to make a covenant with him, that all the males should be circumcised. One year after the making of

the covenant, Sarah brought forth Isaac. First circumcision came; then Isaac came. Without circumcision, there could be no Isaac.

From this background we can understand why God instituted circumcision. What God did was contrary to Abraham's doing. At the age of eight-six, Abraham could still use the strength of the flesh and the method of man. At the age of ninety-nine, he had lost even the slightest hope in himself. If anything was to be done, it would have to be done by the Almighty God. The first time the term Almighty God is used in the Bible is in Genesis 17:1. By this time Abraham was able to realize that unless the Almighty God did something, man was totally powerless. This is the meaning of circumcision. Now let us look at the aspects of circumcision one by one.

THE PUNISHMENT OF UNCIRCUMCISION

Verse 14 says, "And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." You must remember that God cannot reckon those who are uncircumcised as His people, nor can He have any dealings with them. They cannot be reckoned as the descendants of Abraham, nor can the covenant of Abraham reach them.

THE NATURE OF CIRCUMCISION

Verse 12 says, "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations." Circumcision is to cut off a piece of skin from man. Please consider: when God sees that a man is born, why would He want to cut off a piece of skin from him? Is not the birth of the child the creation of God? Yes. Since God gave life to the child, why does He want man to do an additional work of cutting off a piece of skin? Why would God not cause the child to be born circumcised? Why is it necessary for man to do the circumcision? What does it mean that circumcision is to be done on the eighth day? We know that the eighth day is the day of the Lord's resurrection. Being circumcised on the eighth day means putting off the lusts of our flesh through the resurrection of Christ. The meaning of circumcision is to put off the lusts of the flesh.

Why did God not ordain man to be circumcised on the day of his birth, rather than on the eighth day? Here we see the difference between creation

and redemption, the difference between the natural and the resurrected. We all understand the gospel. Does a man become a Christian by receiving spiritual life right after he is born? According to the Bible, a child born of even the best couple still needs regeneration. This is because a person born naturally only has the power of God's creation in him; he does not have the power of God's redemption in him. Man has been created by God, but man does not have the resurrection life, the life of God. The most adorable thing in the whole world is a newborn baby. A child that is just born is the most undefiled. However, on the eighth day, if he is not circumcised in Christ, he will be cut off.

Brothers and sisters, perhaps you are naturally very nice, meek, and without any entanglement of sin. Perhaps you feel that your morality is better than others. But if you are not circumcised, you are not one of God's people. If a newborn child needs to be circumcised, how much more do you and I need the same? Eight days after a child is born, he has to be circumcised. What about you and I, who have been on this earth for more than ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years? We do not know how much filth our hands have touched and how much mud our feet have touched. Even more we need to be circumcised on the eighth day! None of us can see God according to our natural condition. Without circumcision, regardless how many sermons we have heard, we will still eventually perish. According to man's natural condition, we are destined to perish.

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE NEED CIRCUMCISION?

Verse 12 says, "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed." Who needs to be circumcised? Two kinds of people need circumcision: those who are born in the house and those bought with money. Whether born or bought, all have to be circumcised. Thank and praise God that we were both born of God and bought by God. We were not only bought by God, but also born of God.

First Peter 1:18 and 19 say, "Knowing that it was not with corruptible things, with silver or gold...but with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ." First Corinthians 6:20 says, "For you have been bought with a price." This tells us that we were bought by God.

John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and 1 John 3:9 says, "Everyone who has been begotten of God..." These verses tell us that we are born of God.

We thank and praise God that although He did not make a covenant with us Gentiles, we all have the possibility of being circumcised. Exodus 12:48 says, "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land." This tells us that a stranger can also be circumcised. Today, if there is anyone here who has not believed in the Lord, if you are willing to be circumcised, you can be the same as the people of God.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CIRCUMCISION

The significance of circumcision is to put off the lust of the flesh. No one can serve God by the flesh. The Lord said that the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). Romans 8:7 says that the flesh is enmity against God. If we want to serve God, have a share of the covenant, and do the works of God, we must put off the flesh.

What is the meaning of the flesh? The flesh is what man has by his birth, what man has originally before he believes in the Lord. Whether it is good or bad, the flesh has to be circumcised because it is not subject to God, neither can it be. Even if the flesh does good, it still cannot please God. If we, who have believed in the Lord, want to please God, we have to be circumcised in the heart. The descendants of Abraham were circumcised in the body; we need to be circumcised in the heart. Being circumcised in the heart is not only found in the New Testament; it is found in the Old Testament as well.

Jeremiah 4:4 says, "Circumcise yourselves to Jehovah, / And remove the foreskins of your heart." A filthy heart cannot see God. Brothers and sisters, let me ask you a most straightforward question: Are all your hearts clean and without any filthiness? Many people have pride, jealousy, and filthiness in their heart. Without cutting these off, they cannot see God. Someone with an unclean heart cannot see God. An unholy one cannot see God. Perhaps your outward behavior is quite good. Yet inwardly, you love the world, and in your heart you commit the sins which the immoral commit. Are you inwardly

envious of others' houses, cattle, servants, or wives? If these are not put off from your heart, you cannot participate in God's covenant.

Jeremiah 9:25-26 says, "Behold, days are coming, declares Jehovah, when I will punish all those who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised...for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart." All the nations are uncircumcised in their bodies. All those of the house of Israel are circumcised in their bodies, but uncircumcised in their hearts. These people will be cut off by God. Today we do not care for a circumcision in the past. We are concerned about our hearts. Brothers and sisters, our hearts are most difficult to overcome. Outwardly we can deceive others, but inwardly we are rotten. The uncircumcised in heart cannot draw near to God. Today it is not a matter of how we are outwardly, but of how we are inwardly.

Deuteronomy 10:16 says, "Circumcise then the foreskin of your heart." The meaning here is to remove the filth of your heart.

Deuteronomy 30:6 says, "And Jehovah your God will circumcise your heart." This means the same as the foregoing verse, that is, to cut off the filth of the heart.

The foregoing verses of the Old Testament lay considerable stress on the circumcision of the heart. There is even more emphasis in the New Testament. Romans 2:28 and 29 are most apparent. They clearly tell us that circumcision is not outward in the flesh but inward of the heart. It is not in the letter but in the spirit. What God spoke to Abraham was only the circumcision of the flesh. Today God has gone a step further. Now all must be circumcised in the heart. Whoever is uncircumcised in the heart cannot participate in the covenant of Abraham. The apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians to show us that we have a share in the covenant of Abraham. God's promise to Abraham was prior to the law. What we receive came before the law. If any pride or envy is in our hearts and if they are not put off, we have no share in the covenant of Abraham. Instead, we will be cut off.

When we talk about the meaning of circumcision, if we just stop here, we are preaching the law and not the gospel. Thank and praise God that we have the gospel; we have a way to put off the lust of our heart.

CHRISTIANS BEING CIRCUMCISED IN CHRIST WITH A CIRCUMCISION NOT MADE WITH HANDS

Colossians 2:11 says, "In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." Hallelujah! We thank and praise God because this verse tells us that we were circumcised in Christ. If it said that we are to be circumcised, then it would be wrong and it would be the gospel of hell. God's Word says were. I hope that we would underscore the word were even more. It is not soon to be, but were. It is in Christ that we were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands. What does this mean? This is God's work! We do not know how filthy our hearts are! But on the day of Christ's death, all the filth was crucified on the cross and cut off. This is not the work of others' hands or the work of our own hands. It is Christ who enables us to put off the filth of the lust of the flesh. This is the gospel!

Brothers and sisters, according to your natural condition, you are filthy. If you say that you do not consider yourselves as being that bad, you are deceiving yourselves. What does 1 John 1:8 say? "If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Self-deceived ones are the biggest liars in the world. A big liar lies to others, but a bigger liar lies to himself. We are really dirty and full of sins. We think that by willing, by vowing, by a few more prayers, or perhaps by some more Bible reading, we will be all right. However, these things will not make us victorious. Perhaps you have not committed filthy sins up till now; therefore, you may feel that you are victorious. But let me tell you: you have not yet gained victory. Brothers and sisters, victory does not depend upon how you exercise your will or pray or how you read the Bible. Victory depends upon the fact that God crucified your filth on the day of Christ's death. This is the gospel! Today, will you believe it or not? Perhaps you do not feel any change or any peace. However, I ask you to just believe. As long as you believe, you are victorious.

You should take note that the victory is in Christ and not in you. What is in you is still old. The victory is only in Him. You need to join yourselves to Him. He is the vine, and you are the branches. He is the Head, and you are the members. It is of God that you are in Christ. On the cross, Christ not only redeemed you and gave you eternal life, He also crucified the evil I on the cross. In Him, everything has been accomplished. This is the gospel!

God is not doing anything for you today. He has accomplished everything in Christ. If from today on you do not look at yourself anymore but only at Him, then you will say, "God! I thank and praise You!" This is the gospel! Do not be mistaken! It is not that you must crucify yourself. Nowhere in the New Testament does it tell you to crucify yourself. Instead, the Bible says you have been crucified, you have been circumcised, and everything has been accomplished. Brothers and sisters, the question today is whether or not you believe. Can you say that you have been circumcised on the day of Christ's crucifixion? If you believe, this fact will become your experience.

You may look at yourself and ask why you are still the same, when the gospel you heard says that you have been circumcised. At this moment, Satan will come to tempt. He will say that you are just the same as you have always been and have not changed at all. He will say that the words God said about your circumcision are probably not true! Unconsciously, your faith begins to waver! Many think that, in order to overcome temptation and be above any contamination of sins, it is best if God can give them a proof in their hearts, so that they can feel that they are much better than they were before. However, let me tell you that there is no better proof than the Word of God. If you believe the Word of God, that is the proof. The biggest proof is what God has said, more than whether you become better or feel better! Therefore, brothers and sisters, God's Word says that we have been circumcised in Christ with a circumcision not made with hands. If you believe it, that is good enough. Many will not believe the Word of God without first seeing a change in themselves. This is a big mistake. It is not faith. When you begin to waver in the midst of your daily problems, you should believe that the Word of God is still true. Regardless of your experience, it does not make the Word of God untrue, nor does it make it more true. If you think that what you have heard today is right and that you have really been circumcised because you are a little more patient, or if you think that you have really been circumcised once you have overcome temptation, then let me tell you that this is not faith. It is symptom watching; it is an introspection of your own experience. If this is the case, you will surely fail. It is my experience that whether I feel good or bad, if I believe the Word of God, I can be as firm as a mountain. My feet are upon a rock, and nothing can move me.

If you consider that you are all right and still have some self-confidence, you will stumble. If you truly believe God's Word, considering whatever God says of you to be true, the inexhaustible power of God will be manifested in

you, enabling you to overcome temptations and sins that were previously insurmountable. You will realize that this is not your work but the work of God. You will see all the filth fall away, even as a piece of skin falls away from those who are circumcised in the flesh.

God has accomplished everything in Christ. Whether you feel it or not is not the question. What is important is believing that you are circumcised because God said you have been circumcised in Christ. There is no need to hold on to anything. God cares for the faithfulness of His Word more than your desire for victory. Just take care of believing, and God will take care of success. Many young believers want to hold on to victory by their own strength, but once temptation comes, they fail. Satan then tells you that even after believing you are still the same as you were formerly. Once you consider that this is right, you will be discouraged. If there is a hero of faith who, from the time he believes to the time he experiences, will stand still and hold fast to the attitude that "God said, and it is so," then God will gain the glory. In all the circumstances which are contrary to the Word of God, if you still believe in the Word of God, God will gain the glory. Although there is a cloud above you, the sun above the cloud is still there. Although the circumstance is dark, God's Word is still true. If you believe in God's Word in any circumstance, no cloud can be above your head; your sun will be real. Not believing in God's Word is the biggest sin in the whole world.

Brothers and sisters, today the gospel preached and the message delivered are that you can be victorious. If you cannot be victorious, it is because of your lack of faith. If you still have lust, it is not that Christ has not accomplished salvation, but it is that you do not want it; you refuse to open to it and do not believe. The fact is that you still harbor filth. Christ has accomplished salvation. If there is a sinner who is not saved, it is not because Christ has not saved him or not shed His blood to redeem him. It is because the sinner is unwilling to believe. If you go home and are not able to manifest the Word of God, then your understanding is merely mental; you do not really have faith. If you are seeking, are willing, and believe the Word of God, glorious days will soon be here. While walking on the earth, you will only see the sun; there will be no clouds. May God give us faith. May we all believe the Word of God today. When we believe, we will immediately obtain.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DIVIDE OF THE CROSS

The Normal Christian Life, Ch. 5

The kingdom of this world is not this kingdom of God. God had in His heart a world system—a universe of His creating—which should be headed up in Christ His Son (Col. 1:16, 17). But Satan, working through man's flesh, has set up instead a rival system known in Scripture as “this world”—a system in which we are involved and which he himself dominates. He has in fact become “the prince of this world” (John 12:31).

TWO CREATIONS

Thus, in Satan's hands, the first creation has become the old creation, and God's primary concern is now no longer with that but with a second and new creation. He is bringing in a new creation, a new kingdom and a new world, and nothing of the old creation, the old kingdom or the old world can be transferred to the new. It is a question now of these two rival realms, and of which realm we belong to.

The apostle Paul, of course, leaves us in no doubt as to which of these two realms is now in fact ours. He tells us that God, in redemption, “delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. 1:12, 13).

But in order to bring us into His new kingdom, God must do something new in us. He must make of us new creatures. Unless we are created anew we can never fit into the new realm. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh”; and, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (John 3:6; 1 Cor. 15:50). However educated, however cultured, however improved it be, flesh is still flesh. Our fitness for the new kingdom is determined by the creation to which we belong. Do we belong to the old creation or the new? Are we born of the flesh or of the Spirit? Our ultimate suitability for the new realm hinges on the question of origin. The question is not ‘good’ or bad?’ but ‘flesh or Spirit?’ “That which is born of the

flesh is flesh”, and it will never be anything else. That which is of the old creation can never pass over into the new.

Once we really understand what God is seeking, namely, something altogether new for Himself, then we shall see clearly that we can never bring any contribution from the old realm into that new thing. God wanted to have us for Himself, but He could not bring us as we were into that which He had purposed; so He first did away with us by the Cross of Christ, and then by resurrection provided a new life for us. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature (mg. ‘there is a new creation’): the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Being now new creatures with a new nature and a new set of faculties, we can enter the new kingdom and the new world.

The Cross was the means God used to bring to an end ‘the old things’ by setting aside altogether our ‘old man’, and the resurrection was the means He employed to impart to us all that was necessary for our life in that new world. “We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

The greatest negative in the universe is the Cross, for with it God wiped out everything that was not of Himself: the greatest positive in the universe is the resurrection, for through it God brought into being all He will have in the new sphere. So the resurrection stands at the threshold of the new creation. It is a blessed thing to see that the Cross ends all that belongs to the first regime, and that the resurrection introduces all that pertains to the second. Everything that had its beginning before resurrection must be wiped out. Resurrection is God’s new starting-point.

We have now two worlds before us, the old and the new. In the old, Satan has absolute dominion. You may be a good man in the old creation, but as long as you belong to the old you are under sentence of death, because nothing of the old can go over to the new. The Cross is God’s declaration that all that is of the old creation must die. Nothing of the first Adam can pass beyond the Cross; it all ends there. The sooner we see that, the better, for it is by the Cross that God has made a way of escape for us from that old creation. God gathered up in the Person of His Son all that was of Adam and crucified Him; so in Him all that was of Adam was done away. Then God made, as it

were, a proclamation throughout the universe saying: 'Through the Cross I have set aside all that is not of Me; you who belong to the old creation are all included in that; you too have been crucified with Christ!' None of us can escape that verdict.

This brings us to the subject of baptism. "Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death" (Rom. 6:3, 4). What is the significance of these words?

Baptism in Scripture is associated with salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). We cannot speak scripturally of 'baptismal regeneration' but we may speak of 'baptismal salvation'. What is salvation? It relates not to our sins nor to the power of sin, but to the cosmos or world-system. We are involved in Satan's world-system. To be saved is to make our exit from his world-system into God's.

In the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, says Paul, "the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). This is the figure developed by Peter when he writes of the eight souls who were "saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20). Entering into the ark, Noah and those with him stepped by faith out of that old corrupt world into a new one. It was not so much that they were personally not drowned, but that they were out of that corrupt system. That is salvation.

Then Peter goes on: "Which also after a true likeness (mg. 'in the antitype') doth now save you, even baptism" (verse 21). In other words, by that aspect of the Cross which is figured in baptism you are delivered from this present evil world, and, by your baptism in water, you confirm this. It is baptism "into his death", ending one creation; but it is also baptism "into Christ Jesus", having in view a new one (Rom. 6:3). You go down into the water and your world, in figure, goes down with you. you come up in Christ, but your world is drowned.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved", said Paul at Philippi, and "spake the word of the Lord" to the jailer and his household. And he "was baptized, he and all his, immediately" (Acts 16:31-34). In doing so, he and those with him testified before God, His people and the spiritual powers that they were indeed saved from a world under judgment. As a result, we read, they rejoiced greatly, "having believed in God".

Thus it is clear that baptism is no mere question of a cup of water, nor of a baptistry of water. It is a tremendous thing, relating as it does both to the death and to the resurrection of our Lord; and having in view two worlds. Anyone who has worked in a pagan country knows what tremendous issues are raised by baptism.

BURIAL MEANS AN END

Peter goes on now to describe baptism in the passage just quoted as “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Peter 3:21 A.V.). Now we cannot answer without being spoken to. If God had said nothing we should have no need to answer. But He has spoken; He has spoken to us by the Cross. By it He has told of His judgment of us, of the world, of the old creation and of the old kingdom. The Cross is not only Christ’s personally—an ‘individual’ Cross. It is an all-inclusive Cross, a ‘corporate’ Cross, a Cross that includes you and me. God has put us all into His Son, and crucified us in Him. In the last Adam He has wiped out all that was of the first Adam.

Now what is my answer to God’s verdict on the old creation? I answer by asking for baptism. Why? In Romans 6:4 Paul explains that baptism means burial: “We were buried therefore with him through baptism”. Baptism is of course connected with both death and resurrection, though in itself it is neither death nor resurrection: it is burial. But who qualifies for burial? Only the dead! So if I ask for baptism I proclaim myself dead and fit only for the grave.

Alas, some have been taught to look on burial as a means to death; they try to die by getting themselves buried! Let me say emphatically that, unless our eyes have been opened by God to see that we have died in Christ and been buried with Him, we have no right to be baptized. The reason we step down into the water is that we have recognized that in God’s sight we have already died. It is to that that we testify. God’s question is clear and simple. ‘Christ has died, and I have included you there. Now, what are you going to say to that?’ What is my answer? ‘Lord, I believe You have done the crucifying. I say Yes to the death and to the burial to which You have committed me.’ He has consigned me to death and the grave; by my request for baptism I give public assent to that fact.

In China a woman lost her husband, but, becoming deranged by her loss, she flatly refused to have him buried. Day after day for a fortnight he lay in the house. 'No', she said, 'he is not dead; I talk with him every night.' She was unwilling to have him buried because, poor woman, she did not believe him to be dead. When are we willing to bury our dear ones? Only when we are absolutely sure that they have passed away. While there is the tiniest hope that they are alive we will never bury them. So when will I ask for baptism? When I see that God's way is perfect and that I deserved to die, and when I truly believe that God has already crucified me. Once I am fully persuaded that, before God, I am quite dead, then I apply for baptism. I say, 'Praise God, I am dead! Lord, You have slain me; now get me buried!'

In China we have two emergency Services, a 'Red Cross' and a 'Blue Cross' The first deals with those who are wounded in battle but are still alive, to bring them succour and healing; the second deals with those who are already dead in famine, flood or war, to give them burial. God's dealings with us in the Cross of Christ are more drastic than those of the 'Red Cross'. He does not set out to patch up the old creation. By Him even the still living are condemned to death and to burial, that they may be raised again to new life. God has done the work of crucifixion so that now we are counted among the dead; but we must accept this and submit to the work of the 'Blue Cross', by sealing that death with 'burial'.

There is an old world and a new world, and between the two there is a tomb. God has already crucified me, but I must consent to be consigned to the tomb. My baptism confirms God's sentence, passed upon me in the Cross of His Son. It affirms that I am cut off from the old world and belong now to the new. So baptism is no small thing. It means for me a definite conscious break with the old way of life. This is the meaning of Romans 6:2: "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" Paul says, in effect, 'If you would continue in the old world, why be baptized? You should never have been baptized if you meant to live on in the old realm'. When once we see this, we clear the ground for the new creation by our assent to the burial of the old.

In Romans 6:5, still writing to those who "were baptized" (verse 3), Paul speaks of our being "united with him by the likeness of his death". For by baptism we acknowledge in a figure that God has wrought an intimate union between ourselves and Christ in this matter of death and resurrection. One day I was seeking to emphasize this truth to a Christian brother. We

happened to be drinking tea together, so I took a lump of sugar and stirred it into my tea. A couple of minutes later I asked, 'Can you tell me where the sugar is now, and where the tea?' 'No', he said, 'you have put them together and the one has become lost in the other; they cannot now be separated.' It was a simple illustration, but it helped him to see the intimacy and the finality of our union with Christ in death. It is God that has put us there, and God's acts cannot be reversed.

What, in fact does this union imply? The real meaning behind baptism is that in the Cross we were 'baptized' into the historic death of Christ, so that His death became ours. Our death and His became then so closely identified that it is impossible to divide between them. It is to this historic 'baptism'—this God-wrought union with Him—that we assent when we go down into the water. Our public testimony in baptism today is our admission that the death of Christ two thousand years ago was a mighty all-inclusive death, mighty enough and all-inclusive enough to carry away in it and bring to an end everything in us that is not of God.

RESURRECTION UNTO NEWNESS OF LIFE

"If we have become united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also be the likeness of his resurrection (Rom. 6:5).

Now with resurrection the figure is different because something new is introduced. I am "baptized into his death", but I do not enter in quite the same way into His resurrection, for, Praise the Lord! His resurrection enters into me, imparting to me a new life. In the death of the Lord the emphasis is solely upon 'I in Christ'. With the resurrection, while the same thing is true, there is now a new emphasis upon 'Christ in me'. How is it possible for Christ to communicate His resurrection life to me? How do I receive this new life? Paul suggests, I think, a very good illustration with these very same words: "united with him". For the word 'united' (A.V. 'planted together') may carry in the Greek the sense of 'grafted' [6] and it gives us a very beautiful picture of the life of Christ which is imparted to us through resurrection.

[6] Greek *sumphutos* 'planted or grown along with', 'united with'. The word is used in the sense of 'grafted' in Classical Greek. in the delightful illustration which follows, the analogy of grafting should perhaps not be pressed too closely, for it is not quite safe to imply, without some qualification, that Christ

is grafted into the old stock. But what parable can adequately describe the miracle of the new creation?—Ed.

In Fukien I once visited a man who owned an orchard of long-ien [7] trees. He had three or four acres of land and about three hundred fruit trees. I inquired if his trees had been grafted or if they were of the original native stock. 'Do you think', he replied, 'that I would waste my land growing ungrafted trees? What value could I ever expect from the old stock?'

[7] long-ien (*Euphoria longana*) is a tree native to China. Its fruit resembles an apricot in size and has a round central stone, a dry, light brown, papery skin and a delicious white, grape-like pulp. It is eaten either fresh or dried, and is prized by the Chinese both for its flavor and for its food value.—Ed.

So I asked him to explain the process of grafting, which he gladly did. 'When a tree has grown to a certain height', he said, 'I lop off the top and graft on to it.' Pointing to a special tree he asked, 'Do you see that tree? I call it the father tree, because all the grafts for the other trees are taken from that one. If the other trees were just left to follow the course of nature, their fruit would be only about the size of a raspberry, and would consist mainly of thick skin and seeds. This tree, from which the grafts for all the others are taken, bears a luscious fruit the size of a plum, with very thin skin and a tiny seed; and of course all the grafted trees bear fruit like it.' 'How does it happen?' I asked. 'I simply take a little of the nature of the one tree and transfer it to the other', he explained. 'I make a cleavage in the poor tree and insert a slip from the good one. Then I bind it up and leave it to grow.' 'But how can it grow?' I asked. 'I don't know', he said, 'but it does grow.'

Then he showed me a tree bearing miserably poor fruit from the old stock below the graft, and rich juicy fruit from the new stock above the graft. 'I have left the old shoots with their useless fruit on them to show the difference', he said. 'From it you can understand the value of grafting. You can appreciate, can you not, why I grow only grafted trees?'

How can one tree bear the fruit of another? How can a poor tree bear good fruit? Only by grafting. Only by our implanting into it the life of a good tree. But if a man can graft a branch of one tree into another, cannot God take of the life of His Son and, so to speak, graft it into us?

A Chinese woman burned her arm badly and was taken to hospital. In order to prevent serious contracture due to scarring it was found necessary to graft some new skin over the injured area, but the doctor attempted in vain to graft a piece of the woman's own skin onto the arm. Owing to her age and ill-nourishment the skin graft was too poor and would not 'take'. Then a foreign nurse offered a piece of skin and the operation was carried out successfully. The new skin knit with the old, and the woman left the hospital with her arm perfectly healed; but there remained a patch of white foreign skin on her yellow arm to tell the tale of the past. You ask how the skin of another grew on that woman's arm? I do not know how it grew, but I know that it did grow.

If an earthly surgeon can take a piece of skin from one human body and graft it on another, [8] cannot the Divine Surgeon implant the life of His Son into me? I do not know how it is done. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). We cannot tell how God has done His work in us, but it is done. We can do nothing and need do nothing to bring it about, for by the resurrection God has already done it.

[8] Whatever question medical men may raise as to the account of this unusual incident, the statement which follows is not open to challenge.—Ed.

God has done everything. There is only one fruitful life in the world and that has been grafted into millions of other lives. We call this the 'new birth'. New birth is the reception of a life which I did not possess before. It is not that my natural life has been changed at all; it is that another life, a life altogether new, altogether Divine, has become my life.

God has cut off the old creation by the Cross of His Son in order to bring in a new creation in Christ by resurrection. He has shut the door to that old kingdom of darkness and translated me into the kingdom of His dear Son. My glorying is in the fact that it has been done—that, through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, that old world has "been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). My baptism is my public testimony to that fact. By it, as by my oral witness, my "confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10).

CHAPTER TEN

THE TIMELESSNESS OF THE CROSS

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Every time we consider the cross, it invokes wonder in us! Every time we remember the redemption of the Lord Jesus, our hearts are filled both with sorrow and with joy. To us the Lord's cross is not just a wooden cross, but a symbol of His full redemptive work and of the full salvation accomplished through this redemptive work.

When I first received the Lord, I often wondered how the men in the Old Testament, who came before the time of the Lord's crucifixion, could be saved. At that time I was a babe in the Lord and was quite perplexed by this question.

In recent years I have not seen much of the fresh power of the cross manifested in the believers. It seems that to them the Lord's death is something that happened long ago, over nineteen centuries earlier. As such, it does not seem to have any power.

I thank the Father that He has recently shown me the timelessness of the cross. Because of the above-mentioned two concepts, I consider it necessary that God's saints be acquainted with the teaching of the "timelessness" of the cross. If we realize that the cross is still extremely fresh, how much we will be touched by it!

THE LORD'S DEATH IN RELATION TO THE OLD AND THE NEW COVENANTS

We should first read Hebrews 9:15-17: "And because of this He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament [the same word as covenant in the original], the death of him who

made the testament must of necessity be established. For a testament [covenant] is confirmed in the case of the dead, since it never has force when he who made the testament is living." These few verses show us the relationship between the death of Christ on the cross and the old and new covenants. Under the old covenant men sinned the same way that they now do. Since there was sin, there was the need for the Savior. If a man has sinned and has not received God's forgiveness, he will have to bear his own judgment of sin. God cannot forgive man's sin simply by His mercy. To do so would put Him in unrighteousness. For this reason, in God's way of redemption He established the way of substitution. Under the old covenant He used many sacrifices and offerings to make atonement for man's sins. Since many animals died on man's behalf, man received God's righteous forgiveness. The word "atonement" in Hebrew means to "cover up." Under the old covenant the atonement was but a covering up of man's sins with animals' blood, because the Bible clearly says, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). For this reason, at the fullness of time God sent His Son into the world to die for men. Through His one offering up of Himself, the eternal salvation of redemption was accomplished. The sins which were not removed by the blood of bulls and goats in the Old Testament are now removed through His death, for He is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The death of Christ marked a great change in history. His death divided the old testament age from the new testament age. Before His death, it was the Old Testament age; after His death, it is the New Testament age. The above-mentioned Scripture readings cover this point.

These three verses speak of two kinds of relationships the Lord's death has with the old and the new covenants. Hebrews 9:15 shows how He is the Mediator. Verses 16 and 17 show how He became the One who made the testament.

We have seen that everyone in the first covenant was a sinner. Although they offered to God animals as atonement for their sins, their sins were only covered; their sins were not removed. At that time God did forgive their sins because through the blood of many sacrifices God saw from a distance the blood of His Son and its effectiveness. However, unless the Lord Jesus were to die, God still could not put an end to the problem of sin in the first covenant. Sin must be removed. When Christ died, the sin under the first covenant was removed. We can see the relationship between the Lord's death and the first

covenant from another angle. Every covenant has its conditions. The old covenant also had its demands. When man came short of these requirements, he sinned. The punishment of sin is death. This is why the Lord Jesus had to die on behalf of those in the first covenant and redeem them from their sins. He fulfilled all the requirements of the first covenant, terminated it, and initiated the new covenant.

Through His death He redeemed man from the sins he committed in the first covenant and became the Mediator of the new covenant. His being the Mediator of the new covenant is based on His redemption of the sins of those in the first covenant. Originally, man was to receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. However, because of his sin, man was kept from inheriting it. Now the Lord Jesus has died. Man is redeemed from sin, and the called ones are qualified to receive the eternal inheritance. Hence, the Lord Jesus became the Mediator through the death on the cross. On the one hand, He brought an end to the sins of the old covenant. On the other hand, He brought in the blessing of the new covenant. All these matters are related to His being the Mediator.

Next we should consider Him as the One who made the testament. The word "testament" is "covenant" in the original language. In the above discussion, we had the law of the covenant. All those who transgressed the law died. Christ died in order to redeem us from sin. After this we may consider the testament of the covenant. A testament means an arrangement made by a testator for the passing of his possessions to his heir at the testator's death. The Lord Jesus is the Testator, the One who made the testament. All the blessings of this age and the next belong to Him. Since He was willing to bear the sins of those in the first covenant, He is also willing to pass on all that is promised in this covenant (testament). In order to redeem man from his sins, He had to die. In order for man to inherit the testament, He also had to die. If a man is alive, the testament he makes will not come into effect. He must die before the heir can inherit the inheritance. Here we see the profound relationship between Christ's death and the old and new covenants. In short, without His death there would not be the old and the new covenants. Without His death, the Old Testament could not be complete, for the requirement of its law would not have been met. Without His death there could not be the New Testament, because there would be no way for the blessing of its testament to be passed on to the called ones. But the Lord has died. He has

terminated the first covenant and has enacted the second covenant. Indeed, the New Testament was enacted by His blood.

HOW WERE MEN SAVED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

If the blood of bulls and goats was not able to remove sin, as we mentioned earlier, how then were those in the Old Testament saved? It was by the cross. Man had sinned. Hence, only a man could accomplish the redemption of sin. Although the animals were innocent, and although they were without blemish, they could not redeem man from his sins. Why then did God promise in Leviticus 17 that the blood of creatures was able to redeem one from sin? There must be some very profound meaning here. The things of the law "are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:17). Hence, the sacrifices and the offerings in the Old Testament all refer to Christ. Although Christ had not yet died at the time of the first covenant, God intended that all the sacrifices offered at that time be a type of Christ. Their death was taken as the death of Christ. Through the blood of many animals, God saw the blood of His beloved Son. Through many bulls and goats, He saw "the Lamb of God." Through the many sacrifices, He saw the substitutional death of Christ. When He accepted those offerings, it was as if He was accepting the merit of the death of His Son. Because of this, man was redeemed from his sins. God reckoned the innocent bulls and goats as His dear Son. Hence, He could forgive the sinners based upon the sacrifices they offered. Every time the offerings were slaughtered, they spoke of the coming sacrifice of the Son of God as the sin offering on Golgotha and of His accomplishment of the eternal work of salvation. Because the Lord is a man, He is able to redeem man from sin. Because He is God, He is able to redeem all men, past and present, from their sins.

Those who offered the sacrifices in the Old Testament, consciously or unconsciously, believed in a coming crucified Savior. All their sacrifices were to turn them to the coming Savior. Although the Lord Jesus was not yet born at that time, faith did not look at what could be seen. Rather, it looked at what could not be seen. Faith saw a vicarious Savior from afar and trusted in Him. When the time came, the Son of God came and died for men. What had only been a matter of faith then became a fact.

HOW ARE MEN SAVED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

We know that we are in the New Testament age. How are we saved in this age? Christ has died and salvation is accomplished. If we believe in the Lord Jesus, which means that by faith we receive Him as the Savior, we will be saved. Some have a hard time understanding how Christ could have died for them before they were even born. Indeed this presents a problem to the physical senses. Yet to faith, this is a glorious truth.

First, we must realize that time cannot restrict God. To us mortals, a few decades is a long time. But our God is an eternal God. To Him, even a thousand years do not mean much. Although time can restrict us, it cannot restrict Him. Hence, even though we believe in a Lord who died once for us many years ago, we are saved.

The Bible says that the Lord Jesus offered up Himself once and accomplished the work of redemption (Heb. 7:27). He is God. This is why He can transcend time to redeem those who were thousands of years before Him as well as those who are thousands of years after Him. Not only can He redeem those thousands of years after Him; if, unfortunately, the world goes on for millions of years more, His redemption will still be effective. Once He finished His work, it was accomplished forever. If a sinner desires to be saved now, the Lord does not need to die for him again. This one only needs to accept the merit of the Lord's one offering, and he will be saved. Our faith is not restricted by time either. Faith can lead one into the reality of eternity. As men in the Old Testament looked to a coming Savior and were saved, in the same way we look to a past Savior and are saved. The fact that the matter is past does not mean that it is over. Rather, it means that it is done. The men in the Old Testament looked forward. We at the present time look backward. Faith caused those in the Old Testament to accept a coming Savior. Will not our faith cause us to accept a past Savior?

In reading Hebrews 9:12-15 it would be very meaningful if we link together the three "eternals" in these verses. The Lord accomplished an eternal redemption. By offering up Himself to God through the eternal Spirit, we have obtained an eternal inheritance. Hence, whenever men believe in Him, they receive this redemption. We ought to realize that the worth of the cross is not determined by man. Rather, it is determined by God. God considers the

redemption of the cross as eternal. Therefore, we sinners who have no righteousness of our own should acknowledge God's word as true and should act according to His word and believe in the cross of His Son and be saved.

THE TIMELESSNESS OF THE CROSS

This is the most crucial point. Although the Bible says that the Lord Jesus offered up the sacrifice for sins once, it points out that "having offered one sacrifice for sins, [He] sat down forever..." (Heb. 10:12). The word "one" means that the Lord's sacrifice for sins was perfect; He only needed to redeem man from sins once. However, this sacrifice for sins is forever. It is an eternal sacrifice for sins! This means that not only is the effect of this sacrifice for sins eternal, but the sacrifice itself is eternal. Although Christ has resurrected and is living forever, it seems that His cross continues to exist! May we realize the timelessness of the cross! It is not a past event of nineteen hundred years ago. It remains fresh today.

Revelation 13:8 says, "The Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world." Our Lord is the slain Lamb from the foundation of the world until now and forever. To Him, the cross is not merely an event of a certain time, on a certain date of a certain month of a certain year. Rather, it is something that has existed since the foundation of the world until now. When He created man, He foreknew the price of the coming redemption. He created man with His power. In the same way He redeemed man with His blood. It is as if He was crucified from the beginning when He created man. For thousands of years He suffered the prolonged suffering of the cross. The one death on Golgotha merely signified the grief God's Spirit had borne for a long time. What grace this is! What wonder this is! We have no words to express the meaning of this verse. Before the Lord Jesus left heaven, and while He was still in glory, He knew the suffering of the cross already. He knew during the thousands of years before He came. He knew this at the time of creation. Since eternity past, the cross has been in God's heart. When we consider how in eternity past God knew that He was to create man and that man would become fallen, we realize how His heart, humanly speaking, must have grieved over it. Because He so loved men, He ordained before the foundation of the world that Christ would die on our behalf (1 Pet. 1:20). Although Christ only appeared once in the last times for our sins, through His love for the world He has been grieving and aching since the foundation of the world, as if He has been crucified a thousand times already! What a pity that many people

are now still grieving Him, as if crucifying Him afresh. When we realize such love of His, we cannot help but marvel and stand in awe before Him! This is God's heart! If we realize this, will we not love God all the more? Hence, humanly speaking, those in the Old Testament believed in a coming cross, while those in the New Testament believe in a past cross. Actually, there is no distinction of time and period. The cross of the Old Testament is a present one, and the cross of the New Testament is also a present one. May the Lord open our eyes to see that the cross is timeless.

THE ETERNAL FRESHNESS OF THE CROSS

Those in the Old Testament have died. We shall, therefore, pay attention only to those in the present time. Many people push the cross back nineteen hundred years and consider it as old, outdated, and obsolete. Although it is true that world history considers Christ's Golgotha a historical event, in the believers' spiritual experience the cross of Christ is still a fresh event. It is not old, outdated, or obsolete. We can consider a few verses.

Hebrews 10:19 and 20 say, "Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies in the blood of Jesus, which entrance He initiated for us as a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh." In order to understand these two verses, we have to understand the things mentioned in the Old Testament. In the ancient times, the tabernacle was divided into two sections. The first section was called the Holy Place, and the second section was called the Holy of Holies. The two sections were divided by a veil. Those entering the Holy of Holies had to pass through the veil. God's glory was manifested within the Holy of Holies. No ordinary person could enter the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest could enter it once a year. Before he entered it, he had to first offer sacrifices and make atonement for himself and the people and had to go in with the blood of bulls and goats. For us now, we enter the Holy of Holies through the blood of the Lord Jesus. This signifies the cross. Formerly the high priest entered the Holy of Holies only once a year. Now, through the cross of the Lord Jesus we can enter the Holy of Holies any time. What is the meaning of entering the Holy of Holies? It means that we can come to God to confess our sins, fellowship with Him, and be in His presence.

Those entering the Holy of Holies had to pass through the veil. The veil signifies the body of the Lord Jesus. When He was crucified, the veil of the

temple was rent in half from top to bottom. If the veil had not been rent, men could not have passed through it. If the Lord Jesus had not died and His body not been broken, men could not pass through Him and could not enter the Holy of Holies. At the present time, we come to God through the death of the Lord Jesus. This also signifies the cross.

Our Bible tells us that this way through the veil was opened up for us by the Lord Jesus. Truly, He willingly gave up His life to redeem us.

We need to pay attention to the fact that this way is "new and living." The word "new" in the original language refers to something freshly offered or freshly sacrificed. Here we see the eternal freshness of the cross! The high priest could not rely on the offerings or sacrifices of the previous years. He had to have fresh offerings and fresh sacrifices. He only dared to enter and was able to enter the Holy of Holies through the blood of these animals. What about us now? We come to God by the blood of the Lord and through His body. Every time we come before God, we do not have to offer up sacrifices afresh. Our Sacrifice is forever fresh! The Lord Jesus' cross does not turn old with the years. Its freshness is the same today and forever as it was at the time of crucifixion. Every time we come before God, we can sense the freshness of the Lord's cross. In the ancient times, unless the high priest had fresh blood of newly offered sacrifices, he would die before the Lord. The sacrifice of previous years could not redeem him from his current year's sins. If God did not consider the Lord's redemptive sacrifice as eternally fresh, we would have perished long ago. Thank the Lord that the cross is forever fresh before the Lord. The Lord considers the crucifixion as something freshly accomplished.

This way is also "living." This word can also be translated as "forever living." This way is a way that is "freshly offered." It is also a way that is "forever living." Christ has died and has resurrected; He has accomplished salvation for us and has led us to God. We should know that Christ has resurrected and that His resurrection remains until today. We should also know that Christ has died and that His substitutional death continues until today. The greatest events in the earthly life of Christ were His death and resurrection. Both are not past, obsolete events. They are still fresh today. Since we have such a fresh, redeeming Savior, we should receive Him and come to God through Him to receive forgiveness and blessing.

Revelation 5 records how John saw the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. He said, "And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain" (v. 6). This is a picture of the future. When John saw the Lord in heaven, it was many years after Golgotha. Yet the Lord was like One who had just been slain. The words "having just been slain" can also be translated as "having been freshly slain." In heaven at the time of the ushering in of eternity, the Lord will still be the One who is freshly slain! Oh, the eternal freshness of the cross! Truly the cross passes through all ages and remains fresh! If the cross will be fresh in heaven in that day, how can we consider it as being old today? In the future when the heavenly glory breaks forth, the glory of the cross will prove unfading! When God's redeemed ascend to heaven, they will find the redemption of the cross still as fresh as before!

One point deserves our attention. In the Old Testament Christ is twice called the Lamb (Isa. 53:7; Jer. 11:19). In the Gospels and Acts He is mentioned as the Lamb three times (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32). In the Epistles He is mentioned as the Lamb once (1 Pet. 1:19). However, in Revelation He is mentioned as the Lamb twenty-eight times! The glory of the Lord's cross will outshine all ages! God purposely called His Son the Lamb in this book of eternity. The Lamb here is seen as having been freshly slain. The wound is still there! The eternal wound guarantees eternal salvation. The crucifixion of the Lamb becomes our eternal memorial. God can never forget this. The angels can never forget this, and those ascended and saved ones can never forget the redemption of the cross. Who will receive this eternal salvation? The cross is the only unshakable place. All those who have sinned should come.

THE MEMORIAL OF THE CROSS

God Himself knows the eternal worth of His Son's cross. He has manifested to all the eternal freshness of the cross of His Son. Now He desires to gain the redeemed ones so that they would know this fact also. The realization of the eternal freshness of the cross brings power. The realization of the eternal freshness of the cross brings love. The realization of the eternal freshness of the cross brings victory. The realization of the eternal freshness of the cross brings longsuffering. If we truly know the freshness of the cross, what inspiration we will receive from it! What motivation we will derive from it! If the cross is not old in our heart, we will surely have an intimate fellowship

with our Lord. If a believer has forgotten the cross, it means that he has forgotten the Lord.

The Lord intends that His cross be forever fresh in our spirit and our mind. This is why He told us, "This do, as often as you drink it, unto the remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:25). The words "as often as" imply "frequently." The reason the Lord established His supper is for His saints to remember Him always in His death. He foreknew that many would consider His cross as obsolete. This was why He charged His disciples to always remember His death at the Lord's supper. He knew that worldly affairs, distractions, and temptations would come and would secretly rob the freshness of the cross from us. This is why He charged us to take the supper often and to remember Him. How fresh was the cross to us when we first believed! But after many days, the cross seems to have become hazy. When we first realized the victory of the cross, how fresh it was to us! But through frequent mention of its glory, the cross seems to have become common. However, the Lord does not want to see us losing the freshness of the cross. He desires that we remember the cross often and always have the death of the Lord before us.

It is a pity that we have lost the inspiration of the cross of the Lord Jesus. The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus should be openly portrayed before our eyes all the time (Gal. 3:1). We must never consider the Lord's cross as a mere historical monument.

The book of Galatians is an epistle on the cross. When the cross was openly portrayed before the Galatians, how free they were! When they tried to receive the Holy Spirit through the keeping of the law or be perfected through the work of the flesh, they lost the freshness of the cross. One can tell the spiritual condition of a saint just by his attitude toward the cross. If he considers the cross as something old, it shows that he is cut off from the source of his power.

THE CROSS AND SPIRITUALITY

What are the benefits of knowing the freshness of the cross? The benefits are innumerable. We know that anything new easily touches men. If something happened long ago, it does not have the power to stir men up. If we have the Lord's cross openly portrayed before us every day, how much we will

be moved by it! Joseph in the ancient times was only willing to be Christ's disciple in secret. Nicodemus only dared come to see the Lord in the night. But when both saw the crucifixion of the Lord, they were greatly moved. As a result, they risked offending the crowd and asked for the body of the Lord for burial. The cross can make the most fearful men the most courageous ones. When they beheld Jesus on the cross and the way He suffered and was rebuked by men, the love of the cross inspired them and moved them. Hence, if we have the death of Christ before us all the time, we will be moved in the same way that they were moved. The cross will then become our strength.

"Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1). We should be able to answer this question. If we truly see the Lord's cross all the time, if we truly see how He suffered there, if we see the wounds on His hands and feet and the crown of thorns on His head, if we see how His love and blood mingled, and if we see His sufferings and sorrow, will we not be deeply moved, and will we not cease from doing things that do not please Him or cause Him sorrow? It is because we lack the eternal fresh revelation of the cross before us that we despise the love of the Lord.

If the cross on which the Lord died for us is forever fresh, our crucifixion with Him will also become unchanging. If we have a fresh revelation of the cross day by day, we will add to ourselves many fresh experiences of faith in our dying together with Him. It is because we do not see a daily cross that we have many experiences of sin resurrecting in us. If we see the eternal freshness of the cross and its ever unchanging nature, our death to sin will also be unchanging. Many children of God fail because they do not realize that the death of the cross is not just something that happened a long time ago, but something that is with us continually all the time.

We know that many times we fall unconsciously. Thank God the Father, who does not reject us because of this. The Bible says that "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin" (1 John 1:7). He did not cleanse us just once. The blood of His Son is still continually cleansing us. The word "cleanses" in the original has the sense of a continual action. This is the perpetual work of the cross. How wonderful it is that God has prepared for us such a salvation! If we stumble by accident, and we come to Him and confess our sins, He will forgive us, and the blood of His Son will cleanse us from all sin. What eternal freshness there is in the cross!

ETERNAL SALVATION

If we realize this, we will break forth in loud praises to God the Father. Unfortunately, many people do not know that they are saved forever. We are either not saved or saved forever. If we have once truly accepted the Lord's sacrifice for sin, and if we have once truly trusted in the merit of His cross, His cross will forever speak for us. "This is the law of the burnt offering: the burnt offering itself shall be upon the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it" (Lev. 6:9). The burnt offering is a type of Christ, and the altar is a type of the cross. The night is a type of the present Christless age. It is the same night as the one in Romans 13:12. Since the Sun of righteousness (the Lord Jesus) departed from this world, this world has become the night. It will remain the night until He comes again. The burnt offering shall be burning until daybreak! In the present age, the merit of the Lord's redemption is continually pleading for us! In the night, the Israelites may have been in the camp still murmuring, but the burnt offering on the altar continually interceded for them! We should realize that in the same way the blood is interceding for us. Once we have accepted the cross, it speaks for us forever! This is the eternal salvation.

In the future, when we see the cross in heaven, it will not have become old through the ages. For this reason, the salvation we have received will not become a mere monument through time. Eternity will not be a monotonous and tasteless life. Eternity may be long, but it will not take away the glory of the cross. In eternity we will see God unfolding the glory of the cross for us bit by bit. Lord, teach us the eternal freshness of the cross!

For what reason do the heavenly hosts praise the Lord? "Worthy is the Lamb who has been slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12). At that time we will also praise the Lord forever because of His cross. The cross is the subject of the Bible on earth today. It will be the cause of praise in glory in the future.

Brothers, how fresh is the cross! The cross does not know what time is. The cross does not know what oldness is. May we be constantly moved by it! Oh, may we be lost in the cross all the days of our life! Oh, may the cross not lose its power on us for a day! Oh, may we allow the cross to do a deeper work in us every day! May the Father open our eyes to see the mystery hidden in the

cross of His Son. "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).