
THE PATHWAY TO GLORY

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

THE PATHWAY TO GLORY

by Watchman Nee

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PATHWAY TO GLORY— THROUGH JERUSALEM

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 19:

Notes on Scriptural Messages (3)

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:28-31

The word we should pay attention to in this passage is "Jerusalem." I will clarify a few things first, and then I will come back to this. The Bible records that God spoke to the Lord Jesus from the heavens three times. The first time was when the Lord Jesus rose up from baptism (Matt. 3:16-17); the second time was on the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:28-35), and the third time was after the Lord said, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone" (John 12:24-28). There is one reason why God spoke to the Lord Jesus these three times: He purposely chose the cross! He did not choose a way better than the cross! His baptism was a choice of the cross, a choice of death and burial. On the mount of transfiguration, He also chose the cross; He did not ascend to heaven from there. When He entered Jerusalem and a few Greeks requested to see Him, it was the most glorious moment of His life. But He still chose the cross. He did not choose to be a king as the result of men's adulation.

In today's passage, we see how the Lord chose the cross. Many people say that the mount of transfiguration is a type of the kingdom of God. But the Lord Jesus said that the mount of transfiguration was the kingdom of God. In Luke 9:27 He said clearly, "But I say to you truly, There are some of those standing here who shall by no means taste death until they see the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God descended to the earth for a moment, and the Lord Jesus manifested His glory in the kingdom. The Lord could have ascended to heaven from there, but He was discussing all the things related to the fact of what "He was about to complete in Jerusalem." He purposely chose the cross. Two men, Moses and Elijah, were talking with Jesus. Elijah represents those who will be raptured, whereas Moses represents those who

will be resurrected. At that time, the Lord Jesus was standing at the place of the rapture and the resurrection. However, He had a clear view and a clear vision that the pathway to glory was not the mount of transfiguration, but another way.

Before He came to the mount of transfiguration, the pathway was not so clear. Although it had been decided before the foundation of the world, the pathway became clear after the conversation on the mount of transfiguration. The pathway had to pass through Jerusalem. From this point on, we see the Lord descending from the mountain and heading toward Jerusalem. "And as the days were being fulfilled for Him to be taken up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). "And He journeyed...making His way toward Jerusalem" (13:22). "In the same hour some Pharisees came up, saying to Him, Get out and go from here, for Herod wants to kill you" (v. 31). They were suggesting that the Lord change His course. But the Lord answered saying, "I must journey today and tomorrow and on the following day because it is not acceptable for a prophet to perish outside of Jerusalem" (v. 33). He headed straight toward Jerusalem and would not turn at all. Luke 17:11 says, "And as He was going to Jerusalem..." He did not change His course. Luke 18:31 says, "Behold we are going up to Jerusalem." Luke 19:11 says, "He was near Jerusalem." Verse 28 says, "And having said these things, He went on before them, going up to Jerusalem." Verse 37 says, "And as He was already drawing near..." Verse 41 says, "And as He drew near..." Verse 45 says, "And He entered into the temple." This shows us that the Lord approached Jerusalem step by step!

From Luke 9 to 23, we see a line that leads to Jerusalem. This course was set on the mount of transfiguration.

Was the Lord's heart for Jerusalem itself? No, it was not for Jerusalem but for what would be accomplished in Jerusalem, which was the cross. Jerusalem means the accomplishment of God's will, which is the bearing of the cross. On the mount of transfiguration, glory purposely descended to the world, and the Lord Jesus was enveloped in this glory. In that vision the Lord Jesus clearly saw that the way to glory was through Jerusalem. His face was set toward Jerusalem. Isaiah said that He set His face like a flint (Isa. 50:7). He faced Jerusalem with a stone-like face; there was no change in Him; He went straight from the mountain to the cross.

Why should we pay attention to this matter today? It is because the day of the rapture is near! The day when the Lord will rapture the saints is near! We are not speaking about who will or will not be raptured. We are saying that if a person wants to be raptured, he has to go to Jerusalem. This means that we have to bear the cross; we have to take this pathway. If God has shown us the glory, the rapture, and the resurrection, we have to obey His will and bear the cross, taking up the way of the cross. Please remember that even though the Lord Jesus knew that the time of His being taken up was at hand, He did not wait passively for the rapture. The Bible says, "And as the days were being fulfilled for Him to be taken up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). The cross came before the rapture. If we know that the day is near, we should also set our mind to obey God's will concerning us, which is to bear the cross. The meaning of going up to Jerusalem is nothing other than bearing the cross, which accomplishes God's will.

What do we see along the way to Jerusalem? Let us consider the items one by one.

"And they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans...And they did not receive Him, because His face was set to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:52-53). The Samaritans did not receive the Lord for one reason: His face was set to go to Jerusalem. Whenever we set out to do God's will and take the way of the cross, others will not receive us. We have to ask God day after day to give us a stronger desire for His will. Although men may not be pleased, nevertheless the Lord knows us. At that time, two disciples could not stand the rejection of the Samaritans, and they wanted revenge. The Lord turned and rebuked the two of them, saying that they did not know of what kind of spirit they were. When we are rejected, we feel like saying, "Wait until the judgment seat, and we will see who is right." The Lord rebuked such an attitude. Having said that, the Lord turned to other villages. He did not have time to take care of the reaction of the Samaritans.

"And He journeyed throughout the cities and villages, teaching and making His way toward Jerusalem" (Luke 13:22). This teaches us not to drop everything to wait for the coming of God's kingdom just because the day of the rapture is near. Rather, we should continue in the way of the cross. This is the course; we cannot stop our daily work. The Lord taught as He made His way throughout the cities and villages. If the cross has done a deep enough

work in us, everything will render us help and will cause us to gain deeper and richer experiences.

"In the same hour some Pharisees came up, saying to Him, Get out and go from here, for Herod wants to kill you. And He said to them, Go and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and accomplish healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I am perfected. However, I must journey today and tomorrow and on the following day because it is not acceptable for a prophet to perish outside of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:31-33). In these verses, the Lord spoke some strong words. He said that Herod was a fox. The Lord was comparing Herod to God. Those said that the will of the king had to be fulfilled; the Lord said that the will of God in heaven had to be fulfilled. Compared to God, Herod was just a fox. Although the fox was cunning, it could not stop the Lord from going to Jerusalem. The Lord could not stop His journey because of the word of a fox; He could not change His face or His course because of Herod. He said, "I must journey."

Luke 17:11-19 shows that on His way to Jerusalem, the Lord passed through Samaria and Galilee, and He healed ten lepers. This teaches us that along the way, if there is anything that we ought to do, we should do it. Whether it is the preaching of the gospel or the rendering of help to others, as long as it is something along the way, we should try our best to take care of it. The Lord was set for Jerusalem, but when anything came along His way, He took care of it. He did not decline just because He was set for Jerusalem. We certainly should not change our direction because of the things that come to us along the way, and we should not be caught away by the things we meet to the point that we stop advancing. We should work, and we should save others. However, our course should be set toward Jerusalem. If something is a frustration to our journey toward Jerusalem, we should stop that work. The Lord could have healed the ten lepers on the way and then stopped there without going further to Jerusalem. He also could have healed all the lepers in Samaria, but if He had done this, He would not have been able to save us. It is right for Christians to save sinners and help others. But if a person is stopped by these things from doing God's will, he should not continue them. These things should only be done along the way. It is right to wait for the rapture, but it is also right to do our best to save others. Revelation 22:17 is very meaningful. It says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come!" These two "come's" are the prayer of the Spirit and the bride for the Lord's coming. Following this, it says, "And let him who is thirsty come; let

him who wills take the water of life freely." This shows that after we yearn for His coming, we preach the gospel. May we save a few more men while we are on the earth!

Last year I said that I hoped every brother and sister would save at least one person in 1929. How many have we actually saved? Of course, it is God who causes men to be saved, but have we done our best?

"And taking the twelve aside, He said to them, Behold we are going up to Jerusalem" (Luke 18:31). The Lord did not say "I am going," but "we are going." It is not enough for us to take the way of the cross alone; we should exhort others and lead them on to do God's will and carry the cross also. How do we wait for the rapture? C. H. Mackintosh said, "It is one thing for us to believe that the Lord will come. It is another thing for us to wait for His coming." God does not want us to believe in the Lord's coming in creed only; He wants us to wait for the coming of His Son. The church should pass through everything that God has ordained for it. The book of Ephesians is filled with God's grace. Yet at the same time, it is filled with man's responsibility. If God has not gained what He has purposed, He will not be satisfied. "And all things which have been written through the prophets regarding the Son of Man will be accomplished" (Luke 18:31). May everything God has ordained for us be accomplished in us.

"He spoke further a parable, because He was near Jerusalem and they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said therefore, A certain man of noble birth went to a distant country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return" (Luke 19:11-12). The disciples thought that as soon as they entered Jerusalem, God's kingdom would come and the Lord would be king. The disciples thought that they were going to Jerusalem to enjoy the blessing, but the Lord told them that they were going there to suffer. The disciples thought that going to Jerusalem was for reigning, but the Lord told them that it was for dying on the cross. Going to "a distant country" is to go to heaven, but before that, before the rapture and the resurrection, there must be greater sufferings and darker environments. The shadow of the great tribulation seems to be here already. Before the rapture, there will surely be heavier crosses!

"And having said these things, He went on before them, going up to Jerusalem" (Luke 19:28). He is leading us on in the way which is ahead of us.

A year before that, His face had been toward Jerusalem. Here, it was still the same. He did not change. He does not charge us to go while He stays behind; rather, He leads us along the way.

After the Lord arrived in Jerusalem, we know that He entered the city every day, and at night He stayed at the Mount of Olives. Let us consider His prayer on the last night at Gethsemane, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will...Again, going away a second time, He prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done" (Matt. 26:39, 42). Some interpret the "cup" mentioned at Gethsemane as dying. This interpretation is not entirely correct. The cup refers to the cross. In other words, the Lord asked God to spare Him from going to the cross if it was possible. But then the Lord also said, "Not as I will, but as You will." The Lord could pray, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," but He could not pray, "If it is possible, let Your will not be fulfilled." It is true that the cup was important. But there is a distinction between the cup and God's will. The Lord showed us that God's will was more important than the cross. The second time He prayed, He put the cross and God's will together, and He obeyed, knowing that the cross was God's will. Before this time He could choose, but once He knew that the cup was God's will, He obeyed.

Brothers, what is the mount of transfiguration? The mount of transfiguration is glory; it is the glory after the rapture and the resurrection. However, the mount of transfiguration not only signifies glory; it also signifies a revelation, a vision, and a clear view. The mount of transfiguration reveals that the pathway to glory is through Jerusalem. Today we need the revelation, the vision, and the view of the mount of transfiguration, so that we will clearly see that unless we carry out God's will by bearing the cross, we cannot expect to be raptured. Knowing the coming glory without having the revelation concerning how to enter the coming glory is useless. May the Spirit of God grant us a spiritual vision, so that we know the relationship between the rapture and the accomplishment of God's will. After we have such a view, may we bear the cross and follow the Lord faithfully unto death. May we be like our Lord, who was set toward Jerusalem and did not turn at all. May we be able to say what Paul said, that we have not disobeyed the heavenly vision.

The glory is in sight, yet the sufferings are here! The day of the rapture is near, yet we must first pass through the cross. The day of the rapture is near,

but there is a calling to purposefully carry out God's will and obey Him. This is the pathway which led the Lord to be taken up! The rapture is ordained, and the pathway to Jerusalem is also ordained. Once we are raptured, everything will be over. The times when we experience the most suffering with the Lord are the times when we are most intimate with Him. The times when we feel that the Lord is closest to us are the times when we are suffering with Him. The Lord is ahead of us, and we are behind Him. We should follow the Lord to finish this course!

CHAPTER TWO

THE CRUCIFIXION OF SINNERS WITH CHRIST

The Normal Christian Faith, Ch. 10

The highest goal in the salvation of God is the dispensing of His life into man. This is God's ultimate desire. Only by partaking of the divine life can we have a divine living. It is impossible to have a God-like living with our human life. The manifestation of our life is nothing but sin. In this respect God dealt with our sins and iniquities in a way that would maintain His righteousness. We have seen that the Son of God was judged for this purpose. Those who are in Him have been forgiven of their sins.

THE SOURCE OF SIN

But the salvation of God did not stop with the forgiveness of sins; it went deeper to deal with the source of sin. We have said that man's sins are not caused by his environment. Rather, they originate from the person. The mode of living is merely a natural consequence of the kind of life that is possessed. Since man's life is corrupted, his outward behavior cannot help but be evil.

For example, when I knock on the stand before me with my fingers, a certain sound is produced. You can tell at once that this is a sound produced by wood. If I knock on a piece of metal, it will give a different kind of sound, and you can readily tell the difference between the two. The contrast in sound is caused by the difference in constitution. No matter how I change my manner of knocking, I cannot make a piece of wood sound metallic. Nor can it be done vice versa.

The same is true of the behavior of man. Our environment cannot precipitate something that does not exist within us. A slow person is slow under any kind of circumstance. But a quick disposition is readily detected under the slightest stress in the environment. All outward conduct is a direct result of our inward life. Hence, temptations in the environment are merely catalysts to hasten the exposure of our inner substance. They can never bring forth anything that has not hitherto existed in man.

OUR ENVIRONMENT EXPOSES OUR LIFE

A friend told me once that the human life is programmed by its environment. A good environment will produce fine personalities, and an unhealthy environment is the cause of all vices. All that one needs to do is control the environment, and proper personalities will automatically follow.

I said, "According to what you have proposed, it would mean that salt-water fish have become what they are because of living in the sea, and fresh-water fish are the direct product of the river water. This is surely not true. The environment can never govern what is not in us. The environment only exposes what lies dormant within us!"

Of what does the human life consist? It consists of all kinds of evil and corruption. Give it a gentle knock, and everything will fall out into the open. Many moralists say that all we need to do is suppress ourselves. Many have tried it. They held themselves tightly by the reins, fearing that their evil nature would break loose once they let go even a little. This kind of person is most miserable. Daily they repress their desires. But we know that they can never succeed for long.

GOD NEVER CHANGES OUR LIVES

Can we change the human life? Never! Not only are we unable to change it; even God cannot change it. The life of man is like a sin factory that daily manufactures hundreds of products. Therefore, in addition to the work of forgiveness, God had to deal with the source of sin. Since He is not going to change our life, what basic solution did He provide to save us? We have to look at the second aspect of His salvation.

Romans 6:7: "For he who has died is justified from sin." If a man wants to be delivered from sin, the only way is for him to die. He who has died is freed from sin; it is no longer possible for him to sin.

I know a friend who had an insatiable appetite for card games. Day and night he was obsessed by them. When he could not find partners for a game, he felt tormented beyond measure. Even when he did not have cards in his hands, he would feel better just looking at them. His whole life was governed by cards. However, he is dead now. After he died, he no longer loved cards.

Even if you stuffed cards into his hands, he would not take them anymore. Death has delivered him from his cards.

Consider another example of a very arrogant person. He boasts of everything about himself. There is no way to remove or suppress his pride. One day he dies. If the whole world gathered around him to eulogize and extol his glorious deeds, what would he do? Would he still be proud of himself?

DEATH DELIVERS US FROM SIN

God's salvation for man is death! He who is dead is freed from sin. We have to see the verse that precedes the one we just read.

Romans 6:6: "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." We have to take a closer look at this passage. The Greek word "annulled" has two meanings: one is unemployed; the other is paralyzed or crippled. The idea of unemployment is stronger in this passage. Hence, we can translate this as "that the body of sin might be unemployed."

SIN, THE OLD MAN, AND THE BODY

There are three important agents in this passage. The first is sin, the second is the old man, and the third is the body. Sin is personified; it is a master. This sin does not refer to individual sins. Rather, it is a powerful lord that binds, entangles, and compels man to commit all of the particular sins. Man becomes the slave to sin, being subject to such a tyrant and carrying out all its dictates.

Under ordinary circumstances, man does not feel too much pressure from this master. But the minute he makes up his mind to overcome it, he will find that no matter how much energy he summons, he can never succeed in overturning its power. The more he tries to control his temper, the more he will lose it. Sin is the master. It forces man to submit.

The old man mentioned in the Bible is our own person. Deep in man there is a love for sin. When temptation comes, man rejoices to hear its call and gladly succumbs to its sway. It is true that sin is a powerful agent, but when it is met by the old man, the result is an instant collaboration.

In such a setting, the two go about searching for an instrument and discover the body. The body is thus employed. They will either tell the eyes to look, the ears to listen, or the hands to move. In this way the body executes the order dictated by sin and seconded by the old man. Sin is the director, the old man submits to its orders, and the body carries them out practically in the form of transgressions. These three are one. They agree with one another. The product of this collaboration is the multitude of sins that we commit.

ERADICATION OF SINS

God's salvation is different from our human concepts. His way is deliverance from sin. We think that everything would be all right if sins were uprooted from our being. But God's salvation is not the eradication of sins. He does not pull out our sins like uprooted trees.

The eastern mind always thinks that perfection is attained as soon as one has all sins repressed. But our person is one that loves to sin. It does not even want to suppress sin. Even when it tries grudgingly, there is no lasting result. The way of God is not a subjugation of sin, nor is it a mortification of the body. It is an exchange of person. The old man that was attached to sin is removed, and a new life that abhors sin is put in its place. When temptation comes, this new life naturally shuns it. In this way, the body loses its function in regard to performing sins.

GOD ONLY DEALS WITH THE OLD MAN

Hence, God's salvation is entirely different from the concepts of other religions. God does not deal with sin, nor does He touch the body. All He takes care of is the old man within. This old man is just our life. When the old man is put to death, it means that the old life is terminated, and a new life is put in its place. The two ends, sin and the body, are left untouched, but the middle agent is taken away. Sin can now no longer communicate with the body.

The man that is constituted with this new life is called the new man in the Bible. When temptation comes again, the new man reacts very differently from the old one. He no longer hearkens to those lures. He never seconds the motion of sin, and he never actuates the body to commit evil. The new man is diametrically opposed to sin. He is deaf to the suggestion of sin.

UNEMPLOYED IN REGARD TO SIN

What about the body? At this point, although the body is still willing to be a slave to sin, the power of the latter is blocked by the new man from being transmitted to the body. This new man no longer obeys sin or agrees with its proposals. Under these circumstances, the body has nothing more to do; it becomes unemployed. Formerly, my mouth constantly cursed. Now it does not function that way anymore; it has lost its job. My hands that used to fight with others have been discouraged by the new man. Now they no longer fight; they are likewise unemployed. My eyes, my ears, and even my whole body have become unemployed in regard to sin.

This is what the Bible means when it says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him." It clearly tells us that God deals with the old man. The result is that the body of sin is unemployed, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves. That means we will no longer come under the sway of sin. We have nothing more to do with it.

We can see that the basic strategy in God's salvation is the removal of our life. Our life is just the old man. In God's eyes this has to die. If it does not die, it will produce millions of sinful offspring. It will give birth to jealousy, pride, murder, adultery, and so forth. It has an inherent and insatiable love for sin, and no matter how much you suppress it, it will still run after sin. It takes no effort for it to perform evil, but it is impossible for it to be patient, loving, and holy. There is no other way for God to take but to pronounce death for this life. Its last breath has to be taken from it. It must be utterly terminated. When this happens sin will lose its partner forever.

KILL IT

One time I was at the home of one of my friends. He had a maid who gave him much trouble. Not only was she lazy, but she had the habit of stealing. She possessed every vice that a maid could have. My friend asked for my advice. His intention was for me to preach to her some in the hope that she might change. I told him an extremely simple answer: Give her up and hire another! This is the same way that God deals with us. The human life can never be improved through preaching. God says, "I do not need you anymore." With that He simply kills it. This is God's salvation.

This is the difference between God's provision and our concept. We hope to suppress sin in order to tame the wild desires of it. But what result have we obtained? Many unbelievers have changed their conduct at different times. They were sinful and repulsive; now they are mild and gentle. But this is not the salvation of God. The salvation of God does not depend on how many sins you have committed in the past or how much you have improved. It is not a matter of changing from violence to gentleness. God sees sin as something related to our life. He deals with the problem at its root by removing the life. As long as this life continues, sin remains. But the day that this life is put to death, sin ceases.

NOT A MENTAL RECKONING

This death, furthermore, is not the death that some people talk about, where one merely considers everything in the past to be gone for good. The amazing thing is that you can consider as much as you want that your temper is gone and dead, but in actuality it always comes back. You can only have a psychological reckoning. In reality it is still very alive. It follows you everywhere you go. Whenever you turn around it is there. You can never rid yourself of your temper, no matter how hard you try.

DIE IN CHRIST

How can we die? The answer again goes back to this one fact: God has put us into Christ. God has caused Christ to die, and when we are in Him we died also. We have said that the forgiveness of sin is because we are in Christ. God has put us into Christ. God has caused Christ to die, and since we are in Him, we died also. When God judged Christ, He judged us also. By this judgment our sins are forgiven. We cannot put ourselves to death. The death of Christ, in which God has included us, makes us dead with Him.

Let us read again Romans 6:6: "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." There is no alternative for our old man but to die. There is no choice left for him to take. However, it is not a simple matter to die. God had to include us in Christ and then crucify Him on the cross. When Christ died on the cross, we were all included. From that moment on, we were no longer ourselves; we no longer existed. We never can

or will crucify ourselves. It is our co-crucifixion with Him that took care of the old man. This is the basic solution to the problem of sin.

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

Not only in Romans, but other places in the Bible say that we are crucified with Christ. Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." It is no longer I who live, because the "I" has been crucified with Christ on the cross.

Read Galatians 5:24 again. "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." We do not do the crucifying; we are crucified already with Christ.

We have seen that Christ bore our sins on the cross. Now we see that He also bore our very person on the cross. He has become a substitute for our sins as well as our person. On that day on the cross, there were not only our sins, but also our person. God has included both our sins and our person in Christ. When Christ was crucified, so were we. If we see this one point, the rest will be clear.

A hymn describes well this fact:

I am crucified with Christ,
And the cross hath set me free;
I have ris'n again with Christ,
And He lives and reigns in me.
Oh! it is so sweet to die with Christ,
To the world, and self, and sin;
Oh! it is so sweet to live with Christ,
As He lives and reigns within.

Hymns, #482, verse 1

CHRIST IS A CORPORATE MAN

We can see from the Bible that Christ is not an individual person. He is a corporate man. This is like a legal term, a "juristic person." Everyone is incorporated into such a corporate person. Whatever the juristic person does signifies the act of everyone else. Using our previous analogy, it is the same as

saying that if Hwang-ti had died, all of his descendants would have died; the whole Chinese race would have been terminated there. We are included in Christ. When Christ died on the cross, we who are in Him died on it as well. By the judgment of Christ we are forgiven; by His death we are set free from ourselves. On the negative side, we receive the forgiveness of sins outwardly and the termination of the old life inwardly. On the positive side, we start afresh in Christ with the new life obtained from God.

CHAPTER THREE

HAVING BEEN MADE DEAD TO THE LAW

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Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:4, 15-19

Romans 7 is a very familiar chapter to us. Not only is it familiar to us in our reading, it is also familiar to us in our experience. We often read Romans 7 and often practice Romans 7. What the Lord wants me to speak on today is the way to be delivered from the demand of the law, that is, the way to be delivered from ourselves.

WHO CAN RECEIVE GOD'S DELIVERANCE

Before we speak on the subject of deliverance and the way to be delivered, I will first mention one qualification. What type of persons are qualified to speak about deliverance? Brothers and sisters, although God's deliverance is for everyone, not everyone receives deliverance. Although it is possible for everyone to be delivered from the law, not everyone is actually delivered. The problem is absolutely not with God but with man, because man does not want to be delivered and has not paid the price for deliverance. The apostle who wrote Romans 7 was eventually delivered because he paid the price; he hated something and he willed to do something. The biggest problem that confronts us today is that we are not yet delivered. Yet I would like to ask if we have deeply hated the temper that we have not been able to overcome. Have we deeply hated the sin that causes us to fall and the things that stumble us all the time? Or are we willing to say that sinning is something common to all Christians and is, therefore, unavoidable? Do we sense a hatred for the unclean thoughts, the sinful deeds, the entangling temper, and the evil lusts; do we look for deliverance from them? The apostle not only speaks of deliverance in this chapter but also of his feeling before his deliverance. Before he was delivered, he hated what he repeatedly did. He did not practice what he willed, and he did what he hated. The first question is whether we love or hate the things that we are doing. The apostle experienced deliverance

because he deeply hated and desperately sought for deliverance. He was so disgusted with his life of sin that he could no longer tolerate it; he felt that he could no longer go along with it. He hated it so much that he wished to die. He would not allow it to go on for a moment longer. He experienced the deliverance because he had such a determination.

Brothers and sisters, do you have such a hunger within? Have you ever said that you cannot continue to live a life that is bound and entangled with sin? Have you realized how loathsome such a living is? Brothers and sisters, the words which God commissioned me to speak this morning are only for those who desire deliverance and consider that the level of their Christian life is too low. My words are not for those who are self-satisfied and content with living in sin and failure. They are for those who seek deliverance and have not found the way. They are not for those who think it is all right to lose one's temper, to be lustful, or have unclean thoughts. Neither are they for those who think that they only need to confess when they have failed and that everything will be all right as soon as God forgives their sins. The victory in Romans 7 is for those who experience the failures like those in Romans 7. Anyone who is not saved cannot experience this kind of deliverance. Only those who hate their present living and do not wish to continue with such a living can experience this victory. Those who live in failure and sin, not realizing that they have to reject these things, will never find God's deliverance coming to them.

Every time a person wants to have spiritual growth in his life before God, he must first be dissatisfied with his present living. All growth begins from dissatisfaction. One must be pressed to such an extent that he feels he cannot go on anymore, that he has reached the end of himself, and that his living is unacceptable. He must consider that it is no longer acceptable to be bound by the self, the world, and sin; and it is no longer acceptable that what he wills, he does not do, and what he hates, he does. He has to recognize that such a contradictory life cannot go on and that there must be a way out. God will grant His deliverance only to those who are living under these conditions. Therefore, we have a great need before God to ask Him to give us the grace to not be content with our life of sin and failure. Every victory begins with a realization of our failure and wickedness. Everyone who desires deliverance must first be so pressed that he feels he cannot go on. Only then can he experience deliverance. I am merely telling the way; actual deliverance can only come from God. In other words, while I am giving the light, only God gives the revelation directly. Light cannot save; only revelation can save.

THE MEANING OF BEING DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

Romans 7 is a great chapter, and we cannot cover all of it today. We will only mention verse 4. In this verse, the first thing mentioned is: "So then, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law." In other words, we are dead to the law. Brothers, have we realized that we need to be delivered from the law? If I say that we should be delivered from sin, everybody understands because sin is loathsome, and it is right to be delivered from it. If I say that we should be delivered from the world, everyone also understands because the world has crucified our Lord and is indeed evil. If I say that we should be delivered from ourselves, everyone also understands because the flesh is something evil. If I say that we should be delivered from uncleanness or licentiousness, we can still understand. But if I say that we should be delivered from the law, some may say that they do not feel the need for such a deliverance. If the apostle says that we need to be delivered from the self, we say, "Amen." If he says that we need to be delivered from the world or sin, we would again say, "Amen." But when he says that we have been delivered from the law or that we are dead to the law, we do not know how to respond. We realize that what the apostle said cannot be wrong, but we do not understand why he said it. We understand deliverance from sin, from the self, and from the world. But we cannot understand the reason for deliverance from the law. Why did the apostle tell us that we are delivered from the law and that we are dead to the law? What does deliverance have to do with the law? It has a great deal to do with it. Deliverance from the law has a great deal to do with deliverance from the world, from sin, and from the self. Therefore, this is a very important matter.

Brothers and sisters, if we desire to experience deliverance, it is very important that we realize that God has no more hope in us. If we are seeking deliverance, we first need to understand ourselves and realize that we are hopeless. We have to clearly see how God evaluates us and how we evaluate ourselves. All of us belong to Christ; we are His. We may have been Christians for many years, but I am afraid that we have lived a life of failures and frequent stumblings and downfalls. But what happens after each failure? Almost everyone makes a resolution after a failure, saying to himself, "Next time I will do better and will not fail." Every failure brings another heartache and self-condemnation, and the question is raised once more, "Why did I do

this? Why did I fail again? I am a believer and should not be this way. This is too poor!" You become very disheartened. After you fail, as with almost everyone, there are two results. First, you resolve to do better the next time. Second, you feel sorry and sigh, looking back at what you have done and asking why you are so bad. This is what you do all the time. When you fail, you are heartbroken and ask, "How could I have fallen so low? I will never do anything like that again. Lord, deliver me from this!" Your experience is similar to that of Romans 7. Before one heartache goes away, another occasion for heartache comes. One resolution has not worked, but you still find yourself making a second resolution. This goes on time after time and things still do not improve. This is your situation. What is the reason for this? The reason is that you have not yet been delivered from the law, and have not yet seen what the law is, and what being delivered from the law is.

If you want to understand what it is to be delivered from the law, you must first understand the relationship that the law has with us. The law is God's requirement on our flesh. The law is God telling us that we should or should not do something. It is what God says concerning what we ought and ought not to do. It is what God forbids or commands us to do. Therefore, the law is God's requirement on us. In brief, the law is all the demands that God places on those who are in Adam and all the commands that God gives to those who are in Adam, commands that tell them what they should or should not do. (God does this to prove the corruption and the hopelessness of the flesh.) Not only can God put us under the law, but we, who are in Adam, can also put ourselves under the law, hoping that we can please God. We set up ordinances for ourselves to keep, saying, "I should not do this. I should not do that." In addition to the commandments that God has given us, we have also given ourselves many other commandments which are just as severe as the ones God has given. Therefore, God puts His demands on us, and we also put demands on ourselves. This means that we still have a hope in the things of Adam, thinking that we can improve and striving to advance and overcome. Brothers and sisters, God has put us under the law, and at the same time we have put ourselves under the law.

What does it mean to be delivered from the law? It is to entirely lose hope in ourselves. Not only should we entirely lose hope in ourselves, but we should not hope at all. Do not hope for anything concerning ourselves any longer. This is the way to be delivered from the law. God allows us to sin day after day in order to make us realize that we are corrupt and unclean, and it is

impossible to improve. We cannot overcome, and we cannot keep the law. There is no possibility for us to be helped; we are completely useless, and we are not improving. God wants us to realize that the reason He crucified us on the cross, which He did in Christ, is because we are corrupt beyond any hope. When we consider ourselves to be hopeless and realize that God considers us to be hopeless, we will only stand on the position God gives us. God says that we are corrupt to the core and hopeless. We need to say the same thing, that we are corrupt to the core and hopeless. All that we can do is sin. We do not cherish any hope about ourselves anymore. This is what it is to be delivered from the law. What a great deliverance this is! The unique way of deliverance is to consider ourselves as being hopeless.

The last time I was in Canada, I met a certain Mr. G. He was a good man and was also good in the gospel. God used him to save many sinners. Now he is old, over sixty years of age. One day we were walking on the street and talking, and we came to this topic. He said that this is the lesson we have to preach to others all the time. I asked him what he meant, and he began to tell me his history: "When I was a young believer, I was very zealous. I wanted to serve the Lord well, advance, and make myself good. But things always turned out the opposite way. The more I tried, the worse I became, and the more I realized that I could not make it. I was disappointed as well as bewildered. I found no solution. One day another brother said to me, 'Mr. G., God never cherishes the hope that you cherish for yourself. You have so much hope for yourself, but God has no hope in you!' I was very surprised and asked him what God had to say about me. He said, 'God knows that you are powerless and that you cannot do anything. You are hopeless. This is why He crucified you on the cross. What you deserve is only crucifixion and nothing else.' From that day on, the scales seemed to fall from my eyes. I saw that God has not required anything of me, and I saw that I could do nothing. This is why He crucified me on the cross. If that is the case, why do I still need to struggle?"

Brothers and sisters, in theory and in doctrine we know very well that the old Adamic life is irreparable and incurable. But the surprising thing is that in our experience, we still try to repair and improve it; we still cherish hope for the Adamic life. Many people say, "I am surprised that I still commit such a sin!" But I say that we should be surprised if we no longer committed such a sin! Is there any sin that we could not commit? We can commit any sin; the root of all sins is in us. God considers us hopeless and impossible to reform. This is why He crucified us on the cross. When the Lord died, we died also.

God's crucifixion of us on the cross is His evaluation of us. In effect, God is saying that we deserve only death and annihilation.

Brothers and sisters, how different is our evaluation of ourselves from God's evaluation of us. We think that we are able to do something. We think that we can overcome, be holy, and make progress. But God does not cherish any such hope. All we are from head to toe is sin; we are absolutely useless. There is no way to save us except by the way of death. Without death, there can be no deliverance. We always think that there is still a chance for improvement and victory. But there is no such thing. Today we see the first fact, which is God's evaluation of us, how much He thinks we are worth. Brothers and sisters, the ones who see this are blessed before others. Countless numbers of Christians have experienced repeated stumblings, defilements, failures, disappointments, and journeys of hopelessness before they see that God has absolutely no hope in them. The sooner we see this fact, the better it will be for us, because this is the starting point of all deliverance. All genuine release of life begins here. We should see that we deserve nothing but death. The sooner we see this, the faster we will grow. The whole problem hinges on how we view the old Adamic life. We know and have mentioned this over a hundred times: the old Adamic life is irreparable and unalterable. But how many of us have really seen that we deserve to die? How many have seen that there is not another way besides death? Understanding the doctrine is one thing, knowing and seeing is another. Doctrines can only make us understand something in the mind, but seeing requires revelation in our spirit. All the things which do not come from God's revelation and from our seeing are the things that do not count; they are not effective at all.

The meaning of being delivered from the law is to be delivered from God's demands. This means that we have ceased all hope of pleasing God; this comes as a result of understanding the Adamic life and the work of Christ. We no longer hope to do anything to please God. As long as we still hope to please God by our own effort, we are not yet delivered from the law, and we will not be able to avoid heartaches and disappointments. The only way not to be disappointed is for us to know that God has no more hope in us.

HOW TO BE DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

We have seen that, first, we need to be delivered from the law. But how can we be delivered from the law? The only way is death. Death can deliver us

from the law because as long as we live, the law will have a demand on us. A living person is not supposed to break the law because the law will punish him. This is what the apostle said, that as long as the husband lives, the law puts its demands on the wife. However, if he dies, the power of the law will not reach her and will not make demands on her. Therefore, to be delivered from the demand of the law, there is no way except by death. As long as we live, the law will continue to put its demand on us.

For now, I will not speak of how God's law puts its demand on us; I will only speak of how we make demands on ourselves by our own enacted law. When do we do this? If we get up late today, we resolve to get up early tomorrow. We make resolutions to overcome when we are very defiled, when we struggle day and night with sin, when we are in the turbulent current of the world, and when we feel that our life is very wrong. We think that we can make it, that we are able to make it, and that we will make it. In this way, we consider ourselves still to be alive. But by doing this, we will not see the clear work of Christ in us. If we truly know God, we will realize that He has completely given up hope in us. This is why He had no other option than to crucify us on the cross. If we really see that we are only worthy of death, all our resolutions will be gone. I can speak the same thing for myself. Many times I resolved that I would never do such and such a thing again. But afterward, I asked myself again, "Are you not worthy of death? If you are, why do you still make resolutions?" Therefore, we must see that the way to overcome is not by making resolutions but by standing on the ground where God has placed us. We should not cherish the hope that the next time will be better. Instead, we only stand on the ground where God has put us. We should not make resolutions anymore, nor should we hope to advance. We should no longer struggle to overcome because we know that all these are the works of the old Adamic life. We have to put them in the place of death and ignore them. If we are truly standing in the place of death, we will overcome and experience deliverance from all these things. Therefore, death is our only way; it is the unique way of salvation. The world, sin, the self—nothing is able to touch a dead person. If we consider all these things as dead, they will not touch us anymore.

HAVING DIED IN CHRIST

Now we will go one step further to consider how we have died. Verse 4 says, "So then, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the

body of Christ." From this we see that our death is "through the body of Christ." In the same way that Christ died, we died. The time that Christ died is the time that we died. Christ has died, and we have died too. This is not a spiritual suicide, in which we artificially consider ourselves to be dead. Nor is it a repeated declaration to ourselves that we are dead, in an effort to signal to ourselves that we are dead. Rather, when we see Christ's accomplished fact on the cross and realize that God has included us in this death of Christ, we are led to the inevitable conclusion that we have died. There are two spiritual experiences in this world which are most amazing. The first is seeing God's plan, that is, what God has planned for us and what God thinks we should do. For example, He has judged that we are dead. The second is to see what God has done in Christ for us. These two things are very wonderful. We see what God has ordained for us, we see how we have become one with Christ, and we see how, in Him, we can receive all that He has accomplished. When Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, we were included in His death because God has included us in Him. When His body was broken, we were broken as well. His crucifixion is our crucifixion. Therefore, we and Christ are one. This is why we pay attention to the matter of baptism. Many people say that baptism is only an outward ritual and not important. No, it is altogether a testimony of something inward. We believe that when Christ died, we also died. The first thing after a death is burial and this is why we bury ourselves in the water of baptism. If we do not believe that we are dead, we would not be buried. The fact that we are willing to be buried means that we believe we are dead. Therefore, baptism is to believe that Christ has died and that we also have died. This is why we bury ourselves. The burial is a proof that we are dead. Christ has been crucified. When He was crucified on the cross, we were included in Him. When the veil was rent, the cherubim were rent as well. The veil was rent from top to bottom; it was God who rent it from top to bottom. At the same time, the cherubim were also rent by God from top to bottom because the cherubim were sewn on the veil. We know that the veil is the body of Christ, while the cherubim are God's creatures. Therefore, when Christ died, all of God's creation died. This is what it means to be dead to the law through the body of Christ.

The way of deliverance is not to deliberately reckon ourselves dead. Those who have been preaching the doctrine of reckoning themselves dead are preaching the wrong teaching. What is the right teaching? The right teaching is to reckon ourselves dead in Christ. We do not die in ourselves; rather, we

die through the body of Christ. Christ died, and since we are joined to Him, we also died. The secret to victory is never to look at ourselves apart from Christ and never to consider the self that is outside of Christ. This is what the Lord meant in John 15 when He said that we should abide in Him. It means that we should never look at ourselves apart from Christ. What is outside is still very uncomely and cannot be improved. If we want to look at ourselves, we can only look at ourselves in Christ. Once we look at the self outside of Christ, we will immediately fail. Many times we forget the facts that Christ has accomplished. We become angry and frustrated at ourselves and ask why we are the way we are. We continue to fail, fall, and suffer disappointment with a resulting loss of heart. Please remember that these are the things that a person does outside of Christ. Today, in Christ, I have died to the law. If anyone has not received this deliverance and freedom, I would invite you to look at yourself only in Christ. In Christ, God has crucified us because He has judged us irreparable. There is no way to save us except by death. Therefore, God has judged us to be dead, and He has crucified us together in Christ. We are therefore free and delivered from the demands of the law. There are two facts here which we have to absolutely stand on. The first is that God has considered us absolutely hopeless. Only death can deliver us from the law. The second is that in Christ God has crucified us on the cross. The first has to do with God's plan, while the second has to do with God's work. The first is what God has destined, while the second is what God has accomplished. God knows that there is no other way of salvation except through death. We have been broken into pieces, and there is no way for us to become whole again. Herein lies the basis of our redemption—the cross. For this reason, in our daily life we should accept this fact all the time so that we can be delivered from the law. If we stand on this ground, we will not find obstructions. Of course, we should confess and ask God for forgiveness when we fail. But we do not need to look back, because all the failures and degradations come from the old Adamic life. In man's eyes, there is nothing better than to ask the Lord to give us the strength not to do the same thing again. But in God's eyes, this is redundant, because if we have died in Christ, there is no need to make any more resolutions. We have died; our history is over and all our ideas and decisions are also over. Man always thinks that making resolutions is a good thing. But these are like reeds; they cannot fight the enemy, and they are absolutely useless before God.

BEING JOINED TO THE

RESURRECTION LIFE OF CHRIST

What we have seen thus far is that God has crucified us with Christ. This alone, however, is not enough; there needs to be something more. It is that we "might be joined to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit to God." Not only do we need a deliverance on the negative side, we also need a joining on the positive side. Without this, our work is still in vain. For this reason, God has not only crucified us on the negative side but has also joined us, who have been delivered from the law, to the resurrected Christ. Therefore, on the one side there is an exit, and on the other side there is an entrance. On the one side there is the severance, and on the other side there is the union. On the one side we are delivered from the law, and on the other side we are joined to Christ and belong to Christ. This is the resurrection that we have been speaking about. Furthermore, this is not something individual; resurrection brings all the sons into glory. John 12:24 says, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Originally there was only one life. Now this life has entered into many seeds. Originally there was only one organism. Now it has become many organisms. Originally there was only one grain of wheat. Now this grain of wheat has become many grains of wheat. In the same way, when Christ died, He dispensed His life to all the believers. In Christ, there are also two facts. The first is that we have been included in the death of Christ. When Christ died, we also died. The second is that we were resurrected with Christ. God has dispensed His life to us. This is something that every regenerated person shares in common and possesses. I do not wish to say much about this; my emphasis is on the first fact.

We who are resurrected in Christ ought to bear fruit to glorify God. God has given us the life of Christ. By this we can live out His life. The one grain that was planted is exactly the same as the thirty, sixty, or hundred grains that will spring forth. If we plant barley, surely what will come out will not be wheat or cucumber. What is planted will be the same as what grows up; there will not be a change. If what is planted is wheat, surely wheat will grow up. How then can we live a life similar to Christ's life, a life that bears fruit to glorify God? There is only one way; we must allow Christ to be lived out of us and allow Him to live. Christ has not only died for us on the cross but also lives for us within us. How can we live a life of Christ? The only way this could be done is for Christ to give His life to us. Therefore, we must have the life of Christ before we can bear fruit to glorify God.

Today I have presented to you these things before God. May we see that God has given up hope in us and considers us incurable. Although we think that there is hope and strength in us, God has given up hope in us. He has crucified us on the cross. Whenever we are outside of Christ and feel that we are still alive and able, we will immediately fall. Therefore, we can only see ourselves in Christ. When we are in Christ, there are only two facts: we have died and we have resurrected. The resurrected part is in Christ. Therefore, God wants us to live by His life. At the same time, everything that is in Adam has died. If we lay hold of this fact, we are dead to the law. Please remember that we are not only dead to the world, the self, and sin; we are also dead to the law. In this way, we will no longer have any hope for ourselves but will stand firmly in the position where God has placed us.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRUCIFIED UNTO ME

Love Not the World, Ch. 4

Separation to God, separation from the world, is the first principle of Christian living. John, in his revelation of Jesus Christ, was shown two irreconcilable extremes, two worlds that morally were poles apart. He was first carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness to see Babylon, mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth (17:3). Then he was carried in the same Spirit to a great and high mountain, from whence to view Jerusalem, the bride, the Lamb's wife (21:10). The contrast is clear and could hardly be more explicitly stated.

Whether we be a Moses or a Balaam, in order to have God's view of things we must be taken like John to a mountain top. Many cannot see God's eternal plan, or if they see it they understand it only as dry-as-dust doctrine, but they are content to stay on the plains. For understanding never moves us; only revelation does that. From the wilderness we may see something of Babylon, but we need spiritual revelation to see God's New Jerusalem. Once see it, and we shall never be the same again. As Christians therefore we bank everything on that opening of the eyes, but to experience it we must be prepared to forsake the common levels and climb.

The harlot Babylon is always "the great city" (16:19, etc.) with the emphasis on her attainment of greatness. The bride Jerusalem is by contrast "the holy city" (21:2, 10) with the accent correspondingly on her separation to God. She is "from God," and is prepared "for her husband." For this reason she possesses the glory of God. This is a matter of experience for us all. Holiness in us is what is of God, what is wholly set apart to Christ. It follows the rule that only what originated in heaven returns there; for nothing else is holy. Let go this principle of holiness and we are instantly in Babylon.

Thus it comes about that the wall is the first feature John mentions in his description of the city itself. There are gates, making provision for the goings of God, but the wall takes precedence. For, I repeat, separation is the first principle of Christian living. If God wants his city with its measurements and

its glory in that day, then we must build that wall in human hearts now. This means in practice that we must guard as precious all that is of God and refuse and reject all that is of Babylon. I do not imply by this a separation between Christians. We dare not exclude our brethren themselves, even when we cannot take part in some of the things they do. No, we must love and receive our fellow Christians, but be uncompromising in our separation from the world in principle.

Nehemiah in his day succeeded in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, but only in the face of great opposition. For Satan hates distinctiveness. Separation of men to God he cannot abide. Nehemiah and his colleagues armed themselves therefore, and thus equipped for war they laid stone to stone. This is the price of holiness we must be prepared for.

For build we certainly must. Eden was a garden without artificial wall to keep foes out; so that Satan had entry. God intended that Adam and Eve should “guard it” (Gen. 2:15) by themselves constituting a moral barrier to him. Today, through Christ, God plans in the heart of his redeemed people an Eden to which, in triumphant fact, Satan will at last have no moral access whatever. “There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie; but only they which are in the Lamb’s book of life.”

Most of us would agree that to the apostle Paul was given a special revelation of the Church of God. In a similar way we feel that God gave to John a special understanding of the nature of the world. Kosmos is in fact peculiarly John’s word. The other Gospels use it only fifteen times (Matthew nine, Mark and Luke three each) while Paul has it forty-seven times in eight letters. But John uses it 105 times in all, seventy-eight in his Gospel, twenty-four in his epistles and a further three in the Revelation.

In his first epistle John writes: “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (2:16). In these words that so clearly reflect the temptation of Eve (Gen. 3:6) John defines the things of the world. All that can be included under lust or primitive desire, all that excites greedy ambition, and all that arouses in us the pride or glamor of life, all such things are part of the Satanic system. Perhaps we scarcely need stay here to consider further the first two of these, but let us look for a moment at the third. Everything that stirs pride in us is of

the world. Prominence, wealth, achievement, these the world acclaim. Men are justly proud of success. Yet John labels all that brings this sense of success as “of the world.”

Every success therefore that we experience (and I am not suggesting that we should be failures!) calls in us for an instant, humble confession of its inherent sinfulness, for whenever we meet success we have in some degree touched the world system. Whenever we sense complacency over some achievement we may know at once that we have touched the world. We may know, too, that we have brought ourselves under the judgment of God, for have we not already agreed that the whole world is under judgment? Now (and let us try to grasp this fact) those who realize this and confess their need are thereby safeguarded.

But the trouble is, how many of us are aware of it? Even those of us who live our lives in the seclusion of our own private homes are just as prone to fall a prey to the pride of life as those who have great public successes. A woman in a humble kitchen can touch the world and its complacency even while cooking the daily meal or entertaining guests. Every glory that is not glory to God is vainglory, and it is amazing what paltry successes can produce vainglory. Wherever we meet pride we meet the world, and there is an immediate leakage in our fellowship with God. Oh that God would open our eyes to see clearly what the world is! Not only evil things, but all those things that draw us ever so gently away from God, are units of that system that is antagonistic to him. Satisfaction in the achievement of some legitimate piece of work has the power to come instantly between us and God himself. For if it is the pride of life and not the praise of God that it awakens in us, we can know for certain that we have touched the world. There is thus a constant need for us to watch and pray if we are to maintain our communion with God unsullied.

What then is the way of escape from this snare which the Devil has set to catch God’s people? First let me say emphatically that it is not to be found by our running away. Many think we can escape the world by seeking to abstain from the things of the world. That is folly. How could we ever escape the world system by using what, after all, are little more than worldly methods? Let me remind you of Jesus’ words in Matt. 11:18, 19. “John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He hath a devil.’ The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!’ “ Some think that John the

Baptist here offers us a recipe for escape from the world, but “neither eating nor drinking” is not Christianity. Christ came both eating and drinking, and that is Christianity! The apostle Paul speaks of “the elements of the world,” and he defines these as, “handle not, nor taste, nor touch” (Col. 2:20, 21). So abstinence is merely worldly and no more, and what hope is there, by using worldly elements, of escaping the world system? Yet how many earnest Christians are forsaking all sorts of worldly pleasures in the hope thereby of being delivered out of the world! You can build yourself a hermit’s hut in some remote spot and think to escape the world by retiring there, but the world will follow you even as far as that. It will dog your footsteps and find you out no matter where you hide.

Our deliverance from the world begins, not with our giving up this or that but with our seeing, as with God’s eyes, that it is a world under sentence of death as in the figure with which we opened this chapter, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!” (Rev. 18:2). Now a sentence of death is always passed, not on the dead but on the living. And in one sense the world is a living force today, relentlessly pursuing and seeking out its subjects. But while it is true that when sentence is pronounced death lies still in the future, it is nevertheless certain. A person under sentence of death has no future beyond the confines of a condemned cell. Likewise the world, being under sentence, has no future. The world system has not yet been “wound up,” as we say, and terminated by God, but the winding up is a settled matter. It makes all the difference to us that we see this. Some folk seek deliverance from the world in asceticism, and like the Baptist, neither eat nor drink. That today is Buddhism, not Christianity. As Christians we both eat and drink, but we do so in the realization that eating and drinking belong to the world and, with it, are under the death sentence, so they have no grip upon us.

Let us suppose that the municipal authorities of Shanghai should decree that the school where you are employed must be closed. As soon as you hear this news you realize there is no future for you in that school. You go on working there for a period, but you do not build up anything for the future there. Your attitude to the school changes the instant you hear it must close down. Or to use another illustration, suppose the government decides to close a certain bank. Will you hasten to deposit in it a large sum of money in order to save the bank from collapse? No, not a cent more do you pay into it once you hear it has no future. You put nothing in because you expect nothing from it.

And we may justly say of the world that it is under a decree of closure. Babylon fell when her champions made war with the Lamb, and when by his death and resurrection he overcame them, who is Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev. 17:14). There is no future for her.

A revelation of the Cross of Christ involves for us the discovery of this fact, that through it everything belonging to the world is under sentence of death. We still go on living in the world and using the things of the world, but we can build no future with them, for the Cross has shattered all our hope in them. The Cross of our Lord Jesus, we may truly say, has ruined our prospects in the world; we have nothing to live for there.

There is no true way of salvation from the world that does not start from such a revelation. We need only try to escape the world by running away from it to discover how much we love it, and how much it loves us. We may flee where we will to avoid it, but it will assuredly track us down. But we inevitably lose all interest in the world, and it loses its grip on us, as soon as it dawns upon us that the world is doomed. To see that is to be automatically severed from Satan's entire economy.

At the end of his letter to the Galatians Paul states this very clearly. "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (6:14). Have you noticed something striking about this verse? In relation to the world it speaks of the two aspects of the work of the Cross already hinted at in our last chapter. "I have been crucified unto the world" is a statement which we find fairly easy to fit into our understanding of being crucified with Christ as defined in such passages as Romans 6. But here it specifically says too that "the world has been crucified to me." When God comes to you and me with the revelation of the finished work of Christ, he not only shows us ourselves there on the Cross. He shows us our world there too. If you and I cannot escape the judgment of the Cross, then neither can the world escape the judgment of the Cross. Have I really seen this? That is the question. When I see it, then I do not try to repudiate a world I love; I see that the Cross has repudiated it. I do not try to escape a world that clings to me; I see that by the Cross I have escaped.

Like so much else in the Christian life, the way of deliverance out of the world comes as a surprise to most of us, for it is so at odds with all man's

natural concepts. Man seeks to solve the problem of the world by removing himself physically from what he regards as the danger zone. But physical separation does not bring about spiritual separation; and the reverse is also true, that physical contact with the world does not necessitate spiritual capture by the world. Spiritual bondage to the world is a fruit of spiritual blindness, and deliverance is the outcome of having our eyes opened. However close our touch with the world may be outwardly, we are released from its power when we truly see its nature. The essential character of the world is Satanic; it is at enmity with God. To see this is to find deliverance.

Let me ask you: What is your occupation? A merchant? A doctor? Do not run away from these callings. Simply write down: Trade is under the sentence of death. Write: Medicine is under the sentence of death. If you do that in truth, life will be changed for you hereafter. In the midst of a world under judgment for its hostility to God you will know what it is to live as one who truly loves and fears him.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CROSS AND THE SOUL LIFE

The Normal Christian Life, Ch. 12

God has made full provision for our redemption in the Cross of Christ, but He has not stopped there. In that Cross He has also made secure beyond possibility of failure that eternal plan which Paul speaks of as having been from all the ages “hid in God who created all things”. That plan He has now proclaimed “to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:9-11).

We have said that the work of the Cross has two consequences which bear directly upon the realizing of that purpose in us. On the one hand it has issued in the release of His life that it may find expression in us through the indwelling Spirit. On the other hand it has made possible what we speak of as ‘bearing the cross’; that is, our co-operation in the daily inworking of His death whereby way is made in us for the manifestation of that new life, through the bringing of the ‘natural man’ progressively into his right place of subjection to the Holy Spirit. Clearly these are the positive and the negative sides of one thing. Equally clearly we are now touching more particularly on the matter of progress in a life lived for God. Hitherto in dealing with the Christian life we have placed our main emphasis upon the crisis by which it is entered. Now our concern is more definitely with the walk of the disciple, having especially in view his training as a servant of God. It is of him that the Lord Jesus said: “Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).

So we come to a consideration of the natural man and the ‘bearing of the cross’. To understand this we must, at the risk of being tedious, go back once more to Genesis and consider what it was that God sought to have in man at the beginning and how His purpose was frustrated. In this way we shall be able to grasp the principles by which we can come again to live in line with that purpose.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE FALL

If we have even a little revelation of the plan of God we shall always think much of the word ‘man’. We shall say with the Psalmist, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” The Bible makes it clear that what God desires above all things is a man—a man who will be after His own heart.

So God created a man. In Genesis 2:7 we learn that Adam was created a living soul, with a spirit inside to commune with God and with a body outside to have contact with the material world. (Such New Testament verses as 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 confirm this threefold character of man’s being.) With his spirit Adam was in touch with the spiritual world of God; with his body he was in touch with the physical world of material things. He gathered up these two sides of God’s creative act into himself to become a personality, an entity living in the world, moving by itself and having powers of free choice. Viewed thus as a whole, he was found to be a self-conscious and self-expressing being, “a living soul”.

We saw earlier that Adam was created perfect—by which we mean that he was without imperfections because created by God—but that he was not yet perfected. He needed a finishing touch somewhere. God had not yet done all that He intended to do in Adam. There was more in view, but it was as yet in abeyance. God was moving towards the fulfillment of His purpose in creating man, a purpose which went beyond man himself, for it had in view the securing to God of all His rights in the universe through man’s instrumentality. But how could man be instrumental in this? Only by a cooperation that sprang from living union with God. God was seeking to have not merely a race of men of one blood upon the earth, but a race which had, in addition, His life resident within its members. Such a race will eventually compass the downfall of Satan and bring to fulfillment all that God has set His heart upon. It is that that was in view with the creation of man.

Then again, we saw that Adam was created neutral. He had a spirit which enabled him to hold communion with God; but as man he was not yet, so to speak, finally orientated; he had powers of choice and he could, if he liked, turn the opposite way. God’s goal in man was ‘sonship’, or, in other words, the expression of His life in human beings. That Divine life was represented in the garden by the tree of life, bearing a fruit that could be accepted, received, taken in. If Adam, created neutral, were voluntarily to turn that way and,

choosing dependence upon God, were to receive of the tree of life (representing God's own life), God would then have that life in union with men; He would have realized 'sonship'. But if instead Adam should turn to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would as a result be 'free' to develop himself on his own lines apart from God. Because, however, this latter choice involved complicity with Satan, Adam would thereby put beyond his reach the attaining of his God-appointed goal.

THE ROOT QUESTION: THE HUMAN SOUL

Now we know the course that Adam chose. Standing between the two trees, he yielded to Satan and took of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. This determined the lines of his development. From then on he could command a knowledge; he 'knew'. But—and here we come to the point—the fruit of the tree of knowledge made the first man over-developed in his soul. The emotion was touched, because the fruit was pleasant to the eyes, making him 'desire'; the mind with its reasoning power was developed, for he was 'made wise'; and the will was strengthened, so that in future he could always decide which way he would go. The whole fruit ministered to the expansion and full development of the soul, so that not only was the man a living soul, but from henceforth man will live by the soul. It is not merely that man has a soul, but that from that day on the soul, with its independent powers of free choice, takes the place of the spirit as the animating power of man.

We have to distinguish here between two things, for the difference is most important. God does not mind—in fact He intends—that we should have a soul such as He gave to Adam. But what God has set Himself to do is to reverse something. There is something in man today which is not just the fact of having a soul, but which constitutes a living by the soul. It was this that Satan brought about in the Fall. He trapped man into taking a course by which he could develop his soul so as to derive his very life from it.

We must however be careful. To remedy this does not mean that we are going to cross out the soul altogether. You cannot do that. When today the Cross is really working in us, we do not become inert, insensate, characterless. No, we still possess a soul, and whenever we receive something from God the soul will still be used in relation to it, as an instrument, a faculty, in a true subjection to Him. But the point is, Are we keeping within God's appointed

limit—within the bounds set by Him in the Garden at the beginning—with regard to the soul, or are we getting outside those bounds?

What God is now doing is the pruning work of the vinedresser. In our souls there is an uncontrolled development, an untimely growth, that has to be checked and dealt with. God must cut that off. So now there are two things before us to which our eyes must be opened. On the one hand God is seeking to bring us to the place where we live by the life of His Son. On the other hand He is doing a direct work in our hearts to undo that other natural resource that is the result of the fruit of knowledge. Every day we are learning these two lessons: a rising up of the life of this One, and a checking and a handing over to death of that other soul-life. These two processes go on all the time, for God is seeking the fully developed life of His Son in us in order to manifest Himself, and to that end He is bringing us back, as to our soul, to Adam's starting-point. So Paul says: "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:11).

What does this mean? It simply means that I will not take any action without relying on God. I will find no sufficiency in myself. I will not take any step just because I have the power to do so. Even though I have that inherited power within me, I will not use it; I will put no reliance in myself. By taking the fruit, Adam became possessed of an inherent power to act, but a power which played right into Satan's hands. You lose that power to act when you come to know the Lord. The Lord cuts it off and you find you can no longer act on your own initiative. You have to live by the life of Another; you have to draw everything from Him.

Oh, friends, I think we all know ourselves in measure, but many a time we do not truly tremble at ourselves. We may, in a manner of courtesy to God, say: 'If the Lord does not want it, I cannot do it', but in reality our subconscious thought is that really we can do it quite well ourselves, even if God does not ask us to do it nor empower us for it. Too often we have been caused to act, to think, to decide, to have power, apart from Him. Many of us Christians today are men with over-developed souls. We have grown too big in ourselves. We have become 'big-souled'. When we are in that condition, the life of the Son of God in us is confined and almost crowded out of action.

NATURAL ENERGY IN THE WORK OF GOD

The power, the energy of the soul is present with us all. Those who have been taught by the Lord repudiate that principle as a life principle; they refuse to live by it; they will not let it reign, nor allow it to be the power-spring of the work of God. But those who have not been taught of God rely upon it; they utilize it; they think it is the power.

Let us take first an obvious illustration of this. Far too many of us in the past have reasoned as follows. Here is a delightfully good-natured man, with a clear brain, splendid managing powers and sound judgment. In our hearts we say, 'If that man could be a Christian, what an asset he would be to the Church! If only he were the Lord's, what a lot it would mean to His cause!'

But think for a moment. Where did that man's good nature come from? Whence are those splendid managing powers and that good judgment? Not from new birth, for he is not yet born again. We know we have all been born of the flesh; therefore we need a new birth. But the Lord Jesus had something to say about this in John 3:6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh". Everything which comes not by new birth but by natural birth is flesh and will only bring glory to man, not God. That statement is not very palatable, but it is true.

We have spoken of soul-power or natural energy. What is this natural energy? It is simply what I can do, what I am of myself, what I have inherited of natural gifts and resources. We are none of us without the power of the soul, and our first need is to recognize it for what it is.

Take for example the human mind. I may have by nature a keen mind. Before my new birth I had it naturally, as something developed from my natural birth. But the trouble arises here. I become converted, I am born anew, a deep work is effected in my spirit, and essential union with God that has been set up in my spirit, but at the same time I carry over with me something which I derive from my natural birth. Now what am I going to do about it?

The natural tendency is this. Formerly I used to use my mind to pore over history, over business, over chemistry, over questions of the world, or literature, or poetry. I used my keen mind to get the best out of those studies. But now my desire has been changed, so henceforth I employ the same mind in the things of God. I have therefore changed my subject of interest, but I have not changed my method of working. That is the whole point. My

interests have been utterly changed (praise God for that!), but now I utilize the same power to study Corinthians and Ephesians that I used before to pursue history and geography. But that power is not of God; and God will not allow that. The trouble with so many of us is that we have changed the channel into which our energies are directed, but we have not changed the source of those energies.

You will find there are many such things which we carry over into the service of God. Consider the matter of eloquence. There are some men who are born orators; they can present a case very convincingly indeed. Then they become converted, and, without asking ourselves where they really stand in relation to spiritual things, we put them on the platform and make preachers of them. We encourage them to use their natural powers for preaching, and again it is a change of subject but the same power. We forget that, in the matter of our resource for handling the things of God, it is a question not of comparative value but of origin—of where the resource springs from. It is not so much a matter of what we are doing, but of what powers we are employing to do it. We think too little of the source of our energy and too much of the end to which it is directed, forgetting that with God the end never justifies the means.

The following hypothetical case will help us to test the truth of our argument. Mr. A. is a very good speaker: he can talk fluently and most convincingly on any subject, but in practical things he is a very bad manager. Mr. B., on the other hand, is a poor speaker: he cannot express himself clearly but wanders all round his subject, never coming to a point; yet on the other hand he is a splendid manager, most competent in all matters of business. Both these men get converted, and both become earnest Christians. Let us suppose now that I call on them both and ask them to speak at a convention, and that both accept. Now what will happen? I have asked the self-same thing of both men, but who do you think will pray the harder? Certainly Mr. B. Why? Because he is no speaker. In the matter of eloquence he has no resources of his own to depend upon. He will pray: 'Lord, if you do not give me power for this, I cannot do it'. Of course Mr. A. will pray too, but maybe not in the same way as Mr. B. because he has something of natural resource upon which to rely.

Now let us suppose that, instead of asking them to speak, I ask them both to take charge of the practical side of affairs at the convention. What will happen?

The position will be exactly reversed. Now it will be Mr. A.'s turn to pray hard, for he knows full well that he has no organizing ability. Mr. B. of course will pray too, but perhaps without quite the same urgency, for though he knows his need of the Lord he is not nearly so conscious of his need in business matters as is Mr. A.

Do you see the difference between natural and spiritual gifts? Anything we can do without prayer and without an utter dependence upon God must come from that spring of natural life, and is suspect. We must see this clearly. Of course it is not true that those only are suited for a particular work who lack the natural gift for it. The point is that, whether naturally gifted or not, they must know the touch of the Cross in death upon all that is of nature, and their complete dependence upon the God of resurrection. All too readily do we envy our neighbor who has some outstanding natural gift, and fail to realize that our own possession of it, apart from such a working of the Cross, may easily prove a barrier to the very thing that God is seeking to manifest in us.

Shortly after my conversion I went out preaching in the villages. I had had a good education and was well versed in the Scriptures, so I considered myself thoroughly capable of instructing the village folk, among whom were quite a number of illiterate women. But after several visits I discovered that, despite their illiteracy, those women had an intimate knowledge of the Lord. I knew the Book they haltingly read; they knew the One of whom the Book spoke. I had much in the flesh; they had much in the Spirit. How many Christian teachers today are teaching others as I was then, very largely in the strength of their carnal equipment!

Once I met a young brother—young, that is to say, in years, but who had learned a good deal of the Lord. The Lord had brought him through much tribulation to gain that knowledge of Himself. As I was talking to him I said, 'Brother, what has the Lord really been teaching you these days?' He said, 'Only one thing: that I can do nothing apart from him.' 'Do you really mean', I said, 'that you can do nothing?' 'Well, no', he replied. 'I can do many things! In fact that has been just my trouble. Oh, you know, I have always been so confident in myself. I know I am well able to do lots of things.' So I asked, 'What then do you mean when you say you can do nothing apart from Him?' He answered, 'The Lord has shown me that I can do anything, but that He has said, "Apart from me ye can do nothing". So it comes to this, that everything I have done and can do apart from Him is nothing!'

We have to come to that valuation. I do not mean to say we cannot do a lot of things, for we can. We can take meetings, and build churches, we can go to the ends of the earth and found missions, and we can seem to bear fruit; but remember that the Lord's word is: "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). God is the only legitimate Originator in the universe (Gen. 1:1). Anything that you plan and set on foot has its origin in the flesh, and it will never reach the realm of the Spirit however earnestly you seek God's blessing on it. It may last for years, and then you may think you will adjust here and improve there and maybe bring it on a better plane, but it cannot be done.

Origin determines destination, and what was "of the flesh" originally will never be made spiritual by any amount of 'improvement'. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and it will never be otherwise. Anything for which we are sufficient in ourselves is 'nothing' in God's estimate, and we have to accept His estimate and write it down as nothing. "The flesh profiteth nothing." It is only what comes from above that will abide.

We cannot see this simply by being told it. God must teach us what is meant, by putting His finger on something which He sees and saying: 'This is natural; this has its source in the old creation; this cannot abide.' Until He does so, we may agree in principle but we can never really see it. We may assent to, and even enjoy, the teaching, but we shall never truly loathe ourselves.

But there will come a day when God opens our eyes. Facing a particular issue we shall have to say, as by revelation: 'It is unclean, it is impure; Lord, I see it!' The word 'purity' is a blessed word. I always associate it with the Spirit. Purity means something altogether of the Spirit. Impurity means mixture. When God opens our eyes to see that the natural life is something He can never use in His work, then we find we do not enjoy the doctrine any longer. Rather we loathe ourselves for the impurity that is in us; but when that point is reached, God begins His work of deliverance. We are going on shortly to look at the provision He has made for that deliverance, but we must stay for a little longer with this matter of revelation.

THE LIGHT OF GOD AND KNOWLEDGE

Of course, if one does not set out to serve the Lord whole-heartedly, one does not feel the necessity for light. It is only when one has been apprehended

by God, and seeks to go forward with Him, that one finds how necessary light is. There is a fundamental need of light in order for us to know the mind of God; to know what is of the spirit and what is of the soul; to know what is Divine and what is merely of man; to discern what is truly heavenly and what is only earthly; to understand the difference between things which are spiritual and things which are carnal; to know whether God is really leading us or whether we are walking by our feelings, senses or imaginations. It is when we have reached a position where we would like to follow God fully that we find light to be the most necessary thing in the Christian life.

In my conversations with younger brothers and sisters one question comes up again and again. It is: How can I know that I am walking in the Spirit? How do I distinguish which prompting within me is from the Holy Spirit and which is from myself? It seems that all are alike in this; but some have gone further. They are trying to look within, to differentiate, to discriminate to analyze, and in doing so are bringing themselves into deeper bondage. Now this is a situation which is really dangerous to Christian life, for inward knowledge will never be reached along the barren path of self-analysis.

We are never told in the Word of God to examine our inward condition. [15] That way ends only to uncertainty, vacillation and despair. Of course we have to have self-knowledge. We have to know what is going on within. We do not want to live in a fool's paradise; to have gone altogether wrong and yet not know we have gone wrong; to have a Spartan will and yet think we are pursuing the will of God. But such self-knowledge does not come by our turning within; by our analyzing our feelings and motives and everything that is going on inside, and then trying to pronounce whether we are walking in the flesh or in the Spirit.

[15] The two apparent exceptions to this are found in 1 Corinthians 11:28, 31 and 2 Corinthians 13:5. But the former passage calls upon us to discern ourselves as to whether we recognize the Lord's body or not, and this is in particular connection with the Lord's table. It is not concerned with self-knowledge as such. The strong command of Paul in the latter passage is to examine ourselves as to whether or not we are "in the faith". It is a question of the existence or otherwise in us of a fundamental faith; of whether, in fact, we are Christians. This is in no way related to our daily walk in the Spirit, or to self-knowledge.—W.N.

There are several passages in the Psalms which illumine this subject. The first is in Psalm 36:9: “In thy light shall we see light”. I think that is one of the best verses in the old Testament. There are two lights there. There is “thy light”, and then, when we have come into that light, we shall “see light”.

Now those two lights are different. We might say that the first is objective and the second subjective. The first light is the light which belongs to God but is shed upon us; the second is the knowledge imparted by that light. “In thy light shall we see light”: we shall know something; we shall be clear about something; we shall see. No turning within, no introspective self-examination will ever bring us to that clear place. No, it is when there is light coming from God that we see.

I think it is so simple. If we want to satisfy ourselves that our face is clean, what do we do? Do we feel it carefully all over with our hands? No, of course not. We find a mirror and we bring it to the light. In that light everything becomes clear. No sight ever came by feeling or analyzing. Sight only comes by the light of God coming in; and when once it has come, there is no longer need to ask if a thing is right or wrong. We know.

You remember again how in Psalm 139:23 the writer says: “Search me, O God, and know my heart”. You realize, do you not, what it means to say ‘Search me’? It certainly does not mean that I search myself. ‘Search me’ means ‘You search me!’ That is the way of illumination. It is for God to come in and search; it is not for me to search. Of course that will never mean that I may go blindly on, careless of my true condition. That is not the point. The point is that however much my self-examination may reveal in me that needs putting right, such searching never really gets below the surface. My true knowledge of self comes not from my searching myself but from God searching me.

But, you ask, what does it mean in practice for us to come into the light? How does it work? How do we see light in His light? Here again the Psalmist comes to our help. “The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130 A.V.). In spiritual things we are all ‘simple’. We are dependent upon God to give us understanding, and especially is this so in the matter of our own true nature. And it is here that the Word of God operates. In the New Testament the passage which states this most clearly is in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “The word of God is living,

and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:12, 13). Yes, it is the Word of God, the penetrating Scripture of Truth, that settles our questions. It is that which discerns our motives and defines for us their true source in soul or spirit.

With this I think we can pass on from the doctrinal to the practical side of things. Many of us, I am sure, are living quite honestly before God. We have been making progress, and we do not know of anything much wrong with us. Then one day, as we go on, we meet with a fulfillment of that word: “The entrance of Thy words giveth light”. Some servant of God has been used by Him to confront us with His living Word, and that Word has made an entrance into us. Or perhaps we ourselves have been waiting before God and, whether from our memory of Scripture or from the page itself, His Word has come to us in power. Then it is we see something which we have never seen before. We are convicted. We know where we are wrong, and we look up and confess: ‘Lord, I see it. There is impurity there. There is mixture. How blind I was! Just fancy that for so many years I have been wrong there and have never known it!’ Light comes in and we see light. The light of God brings us to see the light concerning ourselves, and it is an abiding principle that every knowledge of self comes to us in that way.

It may not always be the Scriptures. Some of us have known saints who really knew the Lord, and through praying with them or talking with them, in the light of God radiating from them, we have seen something which we never saw before. I have met one such, who is now with the Lord, and I always think of her as a ‘lighted’ Christian. If I did but walk into her room, I was brought immediately to a sense of God. In those days I was very young and had been converted about two years, and I had lots of plans, lots of beautiful thoughts, lots of schemes for the Lord to sanction, a hundred and one things which I thought would be marvelous if they were all brought to fruition. With all these things I came to her to try to persuade her; to tell her that this or that was the thing to do.

Before I could open my mouth she would just say a few words in quite an ordinary way. Light dawned! It simply put me to shame. My ‘doing’ was all so natural, so full of man. Something happened. I was brought to a place where I

could say: 'Lord, my mind is set only in creaturely activities, but here is someone who is not out for them at all'. She had but one motive, one desire, and that was for God. Written in the front of her Bible were these words: 'Lord, I want nothing for myself', Yes, she lived for God alone, and where that is the case you will find that such a one is bathed in light, and that that light illuminates others. That is real witness. [16]

[16] This is one of several references by the author to the late Miss Maragaret E. Barber of Pagoda Anchorage, Foochow. See also pp. 95-6, 239, 256-7, 266-7.—Ed.

Light has one law: it shines wherever it is admitted. That is the only requirement. We may shut it out of ourselves; it fears nothing else. If we throw ourselves open to God, He will reveal. The trouble comes when we have closed areas, locked and barred places in our hearts, where we think with pride that we are right. Our defeat lies then not only in our being wrong but in our not knowing that we are wrong. Wrong may be a question of natural strength; ignorance of it is a question of light. You can see the natural strength in some but they cannot see it themselves. Oh, we need to be sincere and humble, and to open ourselves before God! Those who are open can see. God is light, and we cannot live in His light and be without understanding. Let us say again with the Psalmist: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me" (Psalm 43:3).

We praise God that sin is being brought to the notice of Christians today more than hitherto. In many places the eyes of Christians have been opened to see that victory over sins, as items, is important in Christian life, and in consequence many are walking closer to the Lord in seeking deliverance and victory over them. Praise the Lord for any movement toward Himself, any movement back to real holiness unto God! But that is not enough. There is one thing that must be touched, and that is the very life of the man, not merely his sins. The question of the personality of the man, of his soul-power, is the heart of the matter. To make the question of sins to be everything is still to be on the surface. Holiness, if you only regard sins, is still something on the outside, still superficial. You have not yet got to the root of the evil.

Adam did not let sin into the world by committing murder. That came later. Adam let in sin by choosing to have his soul developed to a place where he could go on by himself apart from God. When, therefore, God secures a race

of men who will be to His glory, and who will be His instrument to accomplish His purpose in the universe, they will be a people whose life—yea, whose very breath—is dependent upon Him. He will be the “tree of life” to them.

What I feel more and more the need of in myself, and what I feel that we all as the Lord’s children need to seek from God, is a real revelation of ourselves. I repeat that I do not mean we should be for ever looking in on ourselves and asking: ‘Now, is this soul or is it spirit?’ That will never get us anywhere; it is darkness. No, Scripture shows us how the saints were brought to self-knowledge. It was always by light from God, and that light is God Himself. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Peter, Paul, John, all came to a knowledge of themselves because the Lord flashed Himself upon them, and that flash brought revelation and conviction. (Isa. 6:5; Ezek. 1:28; Dan. 10:8; Luke 22:61, 62; Acts 9:3-5; Rev. 1:17).

We can never know the hatefulness of sin and the hatefulness of ourselves unless there is that flash of God upon us. I speak not of a sensation but of an inward revelation of the Lord Himself through His Word. It does for us what doctrine alone can never do.

Christ is our light. He is the living Word, and when we read the Scriptures that life in Him brings revelation. “The life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Such illumination may not come to us all at once, but gradually; but it will be more and more clear and searching, until we see ourselves in the light of God and all our self-confidence is gone. For light is the purest thing in the world. It cleanses. It sterilizes. It kills what should not be there. In its radiance the ‘dividing asunder of joints and marrow’ becomes to us a fact and no mere teaching. We know fear and trembling as we recognize the corruption of man’s nature, the hatefulness of our own selves, and the real threat to the work of God of our unrestrained soul-life and energy. As never before, we know how much of us needs God’s drastic dealing if He is to use us, and we know that, apart from Him, as servants of God we are finished.

But here the Cross, in its widest meaning, will come to our help again, and we shall seek now to examine an aspect of its work which meets and deals with our problem of the human soul. For only a thorough understanding of the Cross can bring us to that place of dependence which the Lord Jesus Himself voluntarily took when He said: “I can of myself do nothing: as I hear,

I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 5:30).

CHAPTER SIX

TAKING UP OUR CROSS

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 42:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (2), Chap. 60

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:23-24; Phil. 3:10

GOD'S OBJECTIVE SALVATION AND SUBJECTIVE SALVATION

God's intention in creating man was not only for man to multiply and replenish the earth, but for God to have sons, that is, for Him to have a group of men who would have His life. This group of men would not only have God's image outwardly, but also have His life inwardly. In the garden of Eden, God intended only to do one thing, which was for Adam to receive His life. If Adam had done this, God's goal would have been achieved. After Adam fell, God had to do two things. First, He had to deal with sin, and second, He had to deal with man the person. God dealt with sin so that man would no longer be a sinner. He dealt with man so that man would no longer merely be man. Both as a man and a sinner, man needs God's grace. A sinner needs God's grace in order to have the forgiveness of sins, and a man needs God's grace in order that he may receive God's life. The Adam in paradise needed God's grace, and the Adam outside of paradise also needed God's grace. In the first few evenings, we saw that on the objective side, God solves the problems of the sinner and man by the substitutionary work of the blood and the identifying work of the cross. In the next few evenings, we saw that on the subjective side, God deals with man's problem in life through Christ's flesh becoming our life. The result is that man can now live out the life of Christ.

God has prepared not only an objective salvation for us, but also a subjective salvation. The blood of the Passover signifies the objective redemption, whereas the lamb of the Passover signifies the subjective salvation. All of the Israelites, old and young, had to strike the blood and eat the lamb. This simple type shows us objective salvation as well as subjective salvation. By striking the blood, we receive objective salvation. By eating the

Lord's flesh, our natural elements are eliminated daily, and the Lord lives out of us day by day. This is subjective salvation. Tonight we have to add another item, which is bearing the cross. We can explain this by a diagram:

I wonder how many of you realize the preciousness of this diagram. If there was a meeting concerning this diagram and I had to buy a ticket to get in, I would pay a hundred pounds to get in. Let us look carefully at this diagram.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST

DEALING WITH SIN AND THE OLD MAN

First let us consider the sinner. There are two aspects to the sinner. The first is sin and the second is the old man. Sin is like the product of a factory, whereas the old man is like the factory. Because the old man is corrupt, the product is nothing but sin; one cannot expect any better product than sin. The Lord's blood deals with the product, that is, it deals with man's sin. It cleanses us of our sins and accomplishes an eternal redemption. There are two aspects to cleansing us of our sins. The first is cleansing before God, and the second is cleansing in man. The first aspect removes the record of sin before God and brings in forgiveness. The second aspect removes the guilt in man's conscience. The blood does not cleanse man's heart; it only cleanses man's conscience. Since the Lord has shed His blood on the cross and sin has been judged, God must forgive man's sin. This is most righteous. Man no longer has to worry or be threatened by his sins; he can now enjoy peace. In the Old Testament, after a leper was cleansed, the priests had to sprinkle the holy place seven times and sprinkle the leper seven times (Lev. 14:19; 4:6; 14:7). This signifies that man is at peace when sin is forgiven before God.

However, the blood cannot cleanse our old man, self, or lusts. There is no place in the Bible that says the blood cleanses our old man. The old man must be crucified and annihilated. There is no way to deal with the old man except through death. Even God cannot do anything with it. The old man can only be dealt with by the cross. Hence, the cross of Christ deals with our old man. The sinner's sins are dealt with by the blood, whereas the sinner's old man is dealt with by the cross. The blood signifies the substitutionary death of Christ; He bore God's judgment on the sinner's behalf to secure the forgiveness of sin for us. The cross signifies the identifying death of Christ; our old man was crucified together with Christ and has been terminated.

THE LORD'S FLESH AND OUR CROSS

There are also two aspects to man. On the positive side, he lacks something—God's life. On the negative side, he still has the human, natural, and mortal life, and there is the need for him to be terminated. I want to say a few words here to the unbelievers. It does not matter whether you are good or bad. As long as you do not have the life of Christ, you have nothing to do with God. I have over ten friends who invited me once to a feast at the ancestral hall of a Chen clan, but because my last name is not Chen, I could not participate in the fellowship of that ancestral hall. You do not have to commit any sin to become a sinner. As long as you are a man, you are alienated from the life of God. God's way for man to receive His life is for man to eat His flesh. The Lord's flesh signifies His life which was released through death. This flesh is equivalent to the fruit of the tree of life. Both flesh and fruit are edible—fruit is the edible part of the tree, while flesh is the edible part of an animal. For us to eat the Lord's flesh is for us to regain the blessing of Adam which he lost in paradise.

The blood speaks of the substitutionary death of Christ. The cross speaks of the identifying death of Christ. The flesh speaks of Christ's life-releasing death. He died in order that man may eat His flesh to receive His new life, the life of God. But how can we allow the flesh, that is, God's life, to live within us? In practice, it is through the cross, that is, through bearing the cross. The bearing of the cross signifies our acceptance of God's work. It means that we lose our own soul life, natural life, and allow Christ to live within us.

After Adam sinned, man became the "old man." Before Adam sinned, man was simply man. When God crucified you on the cross with Christ, He crucified the old man; He did not crucify you as a man on the cross. Your hands, feet, mind, will, and emotion are still here. Your personality, self, and natural disposition are still here. What then does Galatians 2:20 mean, when it says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me"? The "I" in this verse refers to two different things: one is the old man, and the other is our personality. In this verse, the first two "I"s refer to the old man, while "me" at the end of the verse refers to our personality. The "I" of the old man is dealt with through crucifixion with Christ, whereas the "I" of our personality is dealt with through bearing the cross.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE CROSS

Our natural human life is mortal and animal. When Adam was in paradise, even before he sinned, his life was mortal; he did not have God's life within him. The natural life needs to be dealt with and the animal life needs to be dealt with even more. Otherwise, God's life will be bound by man's body. This is like the Lord Jesus when He was on earth. The life of God within Him was bound by the body He received from Mary, and it could not be released. However, He dealt with this mortal life and was able to express God's life through His body. The way to deal with the old man is by the cross. The way to deal with the mortal life is also by the cross. Are these two dealings identical? No. The first dealing has to do with the cross of Christ. His crucifixion deals with our sinful self; this is an accomplished fact. The second dealing has to do with our own cross. We have to bear the cross, and it deals with our natural self. This is something that we have to do every day.

TAKING UP OUR OWN CROSS

Every work spoken of in the Bible has its own specific application. For example, here is a chair. If we turn it upside-down, no one can sit on it. We have to apply the two aspects of the cross correctly. The cross of Christ requires faith. Once we believe, it is ours. Its purpose is to deal with sin itself. Our cross does not require faith; it requires obedience. Its purpose is to deal with the self which was there before sin even came in. This self can only be dealt with by obedience.

For your benefit I should mention one thing. I am not only condemning you, I am also condemning myself. Some people are more amiable than others. We tend to be attracted to them. They speak well, and there is nothing sinful or wicked about them. Yet when we are with them, we do not feel the presence of God. Although such a person may talk about God, we can only sense his wisdom or cleverness; we do not sense God. Only his natural life is manifested in him. Eloquence, management skill, and kind dispositions are natural traits. They do not issue from God's life. When a person sits beside us, we may be attracted to him and he may make us feel very comfortable. This kind of natural goodness is often the very thing that frustrates God's life. The natural life is the totality of the life that we have inherited from our parents. It is what remains in our life after the sinful elements have been dealt with. The life of

the old man, the natural life, easily veils God's life and keeps it from being released.

In Luke 9:23 the Lord said, "If anyone wants to come after Me"—this means if anyone wants to live as He lived on this earth—"let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." Verse 24 continues, "For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it." The word "for" at the beginning of verse 24 tells us that verse 24 is an explanation of verse 23. The life spoken of here is the soul-life. Everyone wants to preserve his own soul-life, animal life, and natural life. This life includes such traits as our natural generosity, excellence, and good disposition.

THE CROSS IN PRACTICE

The Lord wants us to take up our cross daily because He wants to cut off our soul-life with the cross. How does the Lord do this? He allows man's misunderstandings to come upon us. When we are misunderstood, we always try to reason. It is not a sin to try to reason, and the natural life always likes to reason. But a Christian has to learn a lesson. He has to say to the Lord, "I thank You. When others misunderstand me, I am eager to justify myself. But vengeance is Yours. I will not try to justify myself." If we ignore ourselves and allow others to misunderstand us, and if we do not justify ourselves even when we have the chance, our capacity will be increased and God's life will become manifest. The daily cross is something that eliminates us day by day. We all want others to understand what we are doing and appreciate us. Yet God allows frustrations to come upon us so that He can eliminate us. Some people wish that their children would not make noise so they could read their Bible quietly; this would be wonderful for them. But those who genuinely bear the cross endure their children's distractions.

Once a father and son came and told me that they had countless grievances and that they needed someone to sympathize with them. I said, "There is nothing wrong with what you have just said; saying these things is not a sin. In fact, you are quite justified in saying these things. But the question is whether or not you are bearing the cross. Please remember that the day you stop bearing the cross is the day that you stop growing. When you reject God's word, you stop growing in the eyes of God, even though you may still have a good appearance before men and may still maintain certain kinds of works."

Man's greatest suffering is finding his desires unfulfilled. When a person cannot satisfy his desires, he may rebel, disagree, or complain in his heart. But if he would lift up his head at that very moment and say to the Lord, "I thank You because this is Your will," his capacity would be increased. Without the cross, all spiritual blessings will stop. When harsh words, unkind expressions, or unhappy incidents happen at home, a person may weep. Yet if he would say to the Lord in tears, "I accept and am satisfied with the things You have permitted to come upon me," he would grow. Madam Guyon said, "Lord, even if You chastise me with a whip, I will still kiss that whip with my mouth." Miss Barber wrote in one of her hymns: "Let the spirit praise Thee,/Though the heart be riven" (Hymns, #377). This was spoken by one who truly knew God and who truly knew the cross.

The Lord has to dig away many unnecessary things in us. Once the cross stops its work in us, growth and victory will also stop. Man is prone to preserve himself, but the cross is here to strip us of our soul-life. The way to be a blessing to others is not by preserving our soul-life, but by losing our soul-life. The more we lose our soul-life, the more we will become a blessing to others.

Mr. Cowman was a person who had deep spiritual experiences in the Lord. While he was working in India, the Lord opened his eyes to see that he should be a servant to others, a "heel" to the Body, and that he should happily accept the ugly things that were heaped upon him. The suffering of the cross is not a suffering of wine mingled with gall. It is a suffering that refuses to avoid pain. Rumors were once circulated about me. At first my natural life could not stand it. I said, "Lord, if I remain silent and do not fight back, I will not be able to do anything." But the Lord showed me Matthew 5:12. His intention is not only that we should not fight back, but that we should accept these things with joy.

THE TONE OF VICTORY

Victory has a certain tone. The tone of victory is thanksgiving and praise. If you cannot give thanks and praise, you have been defeated already. If you are genuinely bearing the cross, you will be able to praise and thank the Lord. There are two kinds of thanksgiving and praise. One is cheap; it thanks and praises the Lord for His grace. The other is expensive; it thanks and praises even when the cross is present. The second kind is better; it is the real offering

of thanksgiving and praise. An offering is a sacrifice, and a sacrifice is something that brings about a loss. Many times, we have to learn to agree with other brothers and to deny ourselves. We often have to learn to agree with our enemy and to oppose ourselves. The crucial things about the cross are the dealing with our individual opinions and ideas on the one hand, and the denial of our preferences and desires on the other hand. If we can overcome our animal life, we will gain God's life. The more we lose, the more we will gain. If we lose our soul-life day after day, we will be on the way to glory day after day, and we will realize that chastisement is a joy.

THE RESULT OF VICTORY— THE ABILITY TO BEAR THE CROSS

Please remember that victory results in our ability to bear the cross. If we do not have any opinion of our own, if others find it easy to take advantage of us, and if we do not fret while we are being taken advantage of, thanking and praising the Lord instead, we are bearing the cross. As a wife, husband, teacher, student, servant, or master, there are countless numbers of things that bother and disturb us every day. We have to realize that nothing that comes upon us comes by accident. All these things are crosses that the Lord has given us. Blessed are those who see God's hand in their environment. Those who avoid the cross are only lovers of themselves. They have not seen God's hand. As a result they miss many blessings. In the past we might not have been able to face the cross, because we were short of strength. But thank the Lord that we have the strength now, and we can face the cross.

If we want to know ourselves, if we want to know sin, and if we want to go on in the way of God's will, we have to learn to stand on the side of those who take advantage of us. We have to learn to love our enemies, to pray for those who curse us, and to have our self broken. We have to learn faith, learn to trust and obey, learn to cease fighting against our environment, and learn to submit to all of God's arrangements. Others may find a certain environment frustrating, but for us, everything is working for our good.

Eight or nine years ago, I read a story which rendered me much help. The story happened in one of the kingdoms in western Asia. The general of the kingdom staged a rebellion to usurp the throne, and the king led his personal guards to confront the rebellion. He only had three thousand soldiers, while the rebellious army had a hundred thousand men. When the king saw the

general, he called for him to surrender. The general asked how many soldiers were on the king's side, and whether the king knew how many men were on his side. The king did not answer, instead he asked one of his guards to jump off from a cliff. The guard obeyed immediately. The king asked a second one to jump into the ocean, and he did so accordingly. He then asked a third to draw a sword and kill himself, and this guard also obeyed without question. When the rebellious general saw this, he was terrified, and he asked how many such men did the king have. The king answered that every one of his men were this way. At that word, the general decided to drop his rebellion and surrendered to the king. Our God demands that we be those who want nothing for ourselves. He wants us to be those who would allow ourselves to be destroyed and trampled under the feet of others. He wants us to be the obedient ones. If we are such persons, we are bearing the cross. We will be those who accept God's arrangements and who do not fight back; our capacity will increase, and God's life will flow out of us in an unhindered way.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PATH OF PROGRESS: BEARING THE CROSS

The Normal Christian Life, Ch. 13

In our previous chapter we have touched several times upon the matter of service for the Lord. As we come now to look at the provision that God has made to meet the problem created by the soul-life of man, it will be helpful if we approach that problem by considering first the principles which govern our work for Him and from which no one who tries to serve Him may deviate. The basis of our salvation, as we well know, is the fact of our Lord's death and resurrection; but the conditions of our service are no less definite. Just as the fact of the death and resurrection of the Lord is the ground of our acceptance with God, so the principle of death and resurrection is the basis of our life and service for Him.

THE BASIS OF ALL TRUE MINISTRY

No one can be a true servant of God without knowing the principle of death and the principle of resurrection. Even the Lord Jesus Himself served on that basis. You will find in Matthew 3 that, before His public ministry ever began, our Lord was baptized. He was baptized not because He had any sin, or anything which needed cleansing. No, we know the meaning of baptism: it is a figure of death and resurrection. The ministry of the Lord did not begin until He was on that ground. After He had been baptized and had voluntarily taken the ground of death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit came upon Him, and then He ministered.

What does this teach us? Our Lord was a sinless Man. None but He has trodden this earth and known no sin. Yet as Man He had a separate personality from His Father. Now we must tread very carefully when we touch our Lord; but remember His words: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me". What does this mean? It certainly does not mean that the Lord had no will of His own. He had a will, as His own words show. As Son of man He had a will, but He did not do it; He came to do the will of the Father. So this is the point. That thing in Him which is in distinction from the Father

is the human soul, which He assumed when He was “found in fashion as a man”. Being a perfect Man our Lord had a soul, and of course a body, just as you and I have a soul and a body, and it was possible for Him to act from the soul—that is, from Himself.

You remember that immediately after the Lord’s baptism, and before His public ministry began, Satan came and tempted Him. He tempted Him to satisfy His essential needs by turning stones to bread; to secure immediate respect for His ministry by appearing miraculously in the temple court; to assume without delay the world dominion destined for Him; and you are inclined to wonder why he tempted Him to do such strange things. He might rather, you feel, have tempted Him to sin in a more thoroughgoing way. But he did not; he knew better. He only said: “If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread”. What did it mean? The implication was this: ‘If You are the Son of God You must do something to prove it. Here is a challenge. Some will certainly raise a question as to whether Your claim is real or not. Why do You not settle the matter finally now by coming out and proving it?’

The whole subtle object of Satan was to get the Lord to act for Himself—that is, from the soul—and, by the stand He took, the Lord Jesus absolutely repudiated such action. In Adam, man had acted from himself apart from God; that was the whole tragedy of the garden. Now in a similar situation the Son of man takes another ground. Later He defines it as His basic life-principle—and I like the word in the Greek: “The Son can do nothing out from himself” (John 5:19). That total denial of the soul-life was to govern all His ministry.

So we can safely say that all the work which the Lord Jesus did on earth, prior to His actual death on the cross, was done with the principle of death on the cross, and resurrection as basis, even though as an actual event Calvary still lay in the future. Everything He did was on that ground. But if this is so—if the Son of man has to go through death and resurrection (in figure and in principle) in order to work, can we do otherwise? Surely no servant of the Lord can serve Him without himself knowing the working of that principle in his life. It is of course out of the question.

The Lord made this very clear to His disciples when He left them. He had died and He was risen, and He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit to

come upon them. Now what is this power of the Holy Spirit, this “power from on high” of which He spoke? It is nothing less than the virtue of His death, resurrection and ascension. To use another figure, the Holy Spirit is the Vessel in whom all the values of the death, resurrection and exaltation of the Lord are deposited, that they may be brought to us. He is the one who ‘contains’ those values and mediates them to men. That is the reason why the Spirit could not be given before the Lord had been glorified. Then only could He rest upon men and women that they might witness; and without the values of the death and resurrection of Christ no such witness is possible.

If we turn to the Old Testament we find the same thing is there. I would refer you to a familiar passage in the seventeenth chapter of Numbers. The matter of Aaron’s ministry has been contested. There is a question among the people as to whether Aaron is truly the chosen of God. They have entertained a suspicion, and have said in effect: ‘Whether that man is ordained of God or not, we do not know!’ and so God sets out to prove who is His servant and who is not. How does He do so? Twelve dead rods are put before the Lord in the sanctuary over against the testimony, and they are there for a night. Then, in the morning, the Lord indicates His chosen minister by the rod which buds, blossoms and bears fruit.

We all know the meaning of that. The budding rod speaks of resurrection. It is death and resurrection that marks God-recognized ministry. Without that you have nothing. The budding of Aaron’s rod proved him to be on a true basis, and God will only recognize as His ministers those who have come through death to resurrection ground.

We have seen that the death of the Lord works in different ways and has different aspects. We know how His death has worked in regard to the forgiveness of our sins. We all know that our forgiveness is based upon the shed Blood, and that without the shedding of Blood there is no remission. Then we have come further and in Romans 6 have seen how death works to meet the power of sin. We have learned that our old man has been crucified in order that henceforth we should not serve sin, and we have praised the Lord that here too His death has worked for our deliverance. Further on still the question of human self-will arises, and the need for consecration is apparent; and we find death working that way to bring about in us a willingness to let go our own wills and obey the Lord. That indeed constitutes a starting point for

our ministry, but still it does not touch the core of the question. There may still be the lack of knowledge of what is meant by the soul.

Then another phase is presented to us in Romans 7 where the question of holiness of life is in view—a living, personal holiness. There you find a true man of God trying to please God in righteousness, and he comes under the law and the law finds him out. He is trying to please God by using his own carnal power, and the Cross has to bring him to the place where he says, ‘I cannot do it. I cannot satisfy God with my powers; I can only trust the Holy Spirit to do that in me.’ I believe some of us have passed through deep waters to learn this, and to discover the value of the death of the Lord working in this way.

Now mark you, there is still a great difference between “the flesh”, as spoken of in Romans 7 in relation to holiness of life, and the working of the natural energies of the soul-life in the service of the Lord. With all the above being known—and known in experience—there still remains this one sphere more which the death of the Lord must enter before we are actually of use to Him in service. Even with all these experiences we are still unsafe for Him to use until this further thing is effected in us. How many of God’s servants are used by Him, as we say in China, to build twelve feet of wall, only, when they have done so, to undo it all by themselves pulling down fifteen feet! We are used in a sense, but at the same time we destroy our own work, and sometimes that of others also, because of there being somewhere something undealt with by the Cross.

Now we have to see how the Lord has set out to deal with the soul, and then more particularly how this touches the question of our service for Him.

THE SUBJECTIVE WORKING OF THE CROSS

We must keep before us now four passages from the Gospels. They are: Matthew 10:34-39; Mark 8:32-35; Luke 17:32-34; and John 12:24-26. These four passages have something in common. In each you have the Lord Himself speaking to us concerning the soul-activity of man, and in each a different aspect or manifestation of the soul-life is touched upon. In these verses He makes it very plain that the soul of man can be dealt with in one way and in one way only, and that is by our bearing the cross daily and following Him.

As we have just seen, the soul-life or natural life that is here in view is something further than what we have in those passages which are concerned with the old man or the flesh. We have sought to make quite clear that, in respect of our old man, God emphasizes the thing He has done once for all in crucifying us with Christ on the Cross. We have seen that three times in the Epistle to the Galatians the ‘crucifying’ aspect of the Cross is referred to as a thing accomplished; and in Romans 6:6 we have the clear statement that “our old man was crucified”, which, if the tense of the word means anything, we might well paraphrase: ‘Our old man has been finally and for ever crucified’. It is something done, to be apprehended by Divine revelation and then appropriated by faith.

But there is a further aspect of the Cross, namely that implied in the expression ‘bearing his cross daily’, which is before us now. The Cross has borne me; now I must bear it; and this bearing of the Cross is an inward thing. It is this that we mean when we speak of ‘the subjective working of the Cross’. Moreover it is a daily process; it is a step by step following after Him. It is this which is now brought before us in relation to the soul, and let us note that the emphasis here is not quite the same as with the old man. We do not have here the ‘crucifixion’ of the soul itself, in the sense that our natural gifts and faculties, our personality and our individuality, are to be put away altogether. Were it so it could hardly be said of us, as it is in Hebrews 10:39, that we are to “have faith unto the saving of the soul”. (Compare 1 Peter 1:9; Luke 21:19.) No, we do not lose our souls in this sense, for to do so would be to lose our individual existence completely. The soul is still there with its natural endowments, but the Cross is brought to bear upon it to bring those natural endowments into death—to put the mark of His death upon them—and thereafter, as God may please, to give them back to us in resurrection.

It is in this sense that Paul, writing to the Philippians, expresses the desire “that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death” (Phil. 3:10). The mark of death is upon the soul all the time to bring it to the place where it is always subordinate to the Spirit and never independently asserts itself. Only the Cross, working in such a way, could make a man of the caliber of Paul, and with the natural resources hinted at in Philippians 3, so distrust his own natural strength that he could write to the Corinthians: “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and

my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:2-5).

The soul is the seat of the affections, and what a great part of our decisions and actions is influenced by these! There is nothing deliberately sinful about them, mind you, but it is simply that there is something in us which can go out in natural affection to another person and which as a result can influence wrongly our whole course of action. So in the first of the four passages before us the Lord has to say: “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37, 38). You note that to follow the Lord in the way of the Cross is set before us as His normal, His only way for us. What immediately follows? “He that findeth his soul shall lose it; and he that loseth his soul for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:39, mg.).

The secret danger lies in that subtle working of the affections to turn us away from the pathway of God; and the key to the matter is the soul. The Cross has to deal with that. I have to “lose” my soul in the sense in which the Lord meant those words, and which we are seeking here to explain.

Some of us know well what it means to lose our soul. We can no longer fulfill its desire; we cannot give in to it; we cannot gratify it: that is the ‘loss’ of the soul. We are going through a painful process to discourage what the soul is asking for. And many a time we have to confess that it is not any definite sin that is keeping us from following the Lord to the end. We are held up because of some secret love somewhere, some perfectly natural affection diverting our course. Yes, affection plays a great part in our lives, and the Cross has to come in there and do its work.

Then we pass to the reference in Mark chapter 8. I think that is a most important passage. Our Lord had just taught His disciples at Caesarea Philippi that He was going to suffer death at the hands of the elders of the Jews, and then Peter, with all his love for his Master, came up and rebuked Him and said to Him: ‘Lord, do not do it; pity Thyself: this shall never come to Thee!’ Out of his love for the Lord he appealed to Him to spare Himself; and the Lord rebuked Peter, as He would rebuke Satan, for caring for the things of men and not the things of God. And then to all present the word was

spoken once more: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his soul shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his soul for my sake and the gospel’s shall save it” (Mark 8:34, 35, mg.).

The whole question at issue is again that of the soul, and here it is particularly of the soul’s desire for self-preservation. There is that subtle working of the soul which says, ‘If I could be allowed to live I would do anything, be willing for anything; but I must be kept alive!’ There you have the soul almost crying out for help. ‘Going to the Cross, being crucified—oh that is really too much! Have mercy on yourself; pity yourself! Do you mean to say you are going against yourself and going with God?’ Some of us know well that in order to go on with God we have many a time to go against the voice of the soul—our own or other people’s—and to let the Cross come in to silence that appeal for self-preservation.

Am I afraid of the will of God? The dear saint whom I have already mentioned as having had such an influence upon the course of my life, many times asked me the question: ‘Do you like the will of God?’ It is a tremendous question. She did not ask, ‘Do you do the will of God?’ she always asked, ‘Do you like the will of God?’ That question cuts deeper than anything else. I remember once she was having a controversy with the Lord over a certain matter. She knew what the Lord wanted, and in her heart she wanted it too. But it was difficult, and I heard her pray like this: ‘Lord, I confess I don’t like it, but please do not give in to me. Just wait, Lord—and I will give in to Thee.’ She did not want the Lord to yield to her and to reduce His demands upon her. She wanted nothing but to please Him.

Many a time we have to come to the place where we are willing to let go things we think to be good and precious—yes, and even, it may be, the very things of God themselves—that His will may be done. Peter’s concern was for his Lord and was dictated by his natural love for Him. We might feel that Peter had a marvelous love for his Lord, sufficient even for him to dare to rebuke Him. Only a strong love could bring one to attempt that! Yes, but when there is purity of spirit without that mixture of soul, you will not be led into Peter’s mistake. You will recognize the will of God and you will find that that is what your heart delights in alone. You will no longer even shed a tear in sympathy with the flesh. Yes, the Cross cuts deeply, and we see here once more how utterly it has to deal with the soul.

Once again the Lord Jesus deals with the matter of the soul in Luke chapter 17, and now it is in relation to His return. Speaking of “the day that the Son of man is revealed”, He draws a parallel between that day and “the day that Lot went out from Sodom” (verses 29, 30). A little later He speaks of the ‘rapture’ in the twice repeated words: “One shall be taken, and the other shall be left” (verses 34-36). But between His reference to the calling of Lot out of Sodom and this allusion to the rapture, the Lord says these remarkable words: “In that day, he which shall be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away: and let him that is in the field likewise not return back. Remember Lot’s wife” (verses 31, 32). Remember Lot’s wife! Why? because “whosoever shall seek to gain his soul shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his soul shall save it alive” (verse 33, mg.).

If I mistake not, this is the one passage in the New Testament that tells of our reaction to the rapture call. We may have thought that when the Son of man comes we shall be taken up automatically, as it were, because of what we read in 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52: “We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump...” Well, however we reconcile the two passages, this one in Luke’s Gospel should at least make us pause and reflect; for the emphasis is here very strongly upon one being taken and the other left. It is a matter of our reaction to the call to go, and on the basis of this a most urgent appeal is made to us to be ready (compare Matt. 24:42).

There is surely a reason for this. Clearly that call is not going to produce a miraculous last-minute change in us out of all relation to our previous walk with the Lord. No, in that moment we shall discover our heart’s real treasure. If it is the Lord Himself, then there will be no backward look. A backward glance decides everything. It is so easy to become more attached to the gifts of God than to the Giver—and even, I should add, to the work of God than to God Himself.

Let me illustrate. At the present time [17] I am writing a book. I have finished eight chapters and I have another nine to write, about which I am very seriously exercised before the Lord. But if the call to ‘come up hither’ should come and my reaction were to be ‘What about my book?’ the answer might well be, ‘All right, stay down and finish it!’ That precious thing which we are doing downstairs ‘in the house’ can be enough to pin us down, a peg that holds us to earth.

[17] 1938.—Ed.

It is all a question of our living by the soul or by the spirit. Here in this passage in Luke, we have depicted the soul-life in its engagement with the things of the earth—and mark you, not sinful things either. The Lord only mentioned marrying, planting, eating, selling—all perfectly legitimate activities with which there is nothing essentially wrong. But it is occupation with them, so that your heart goes out to them, that is enough to pin you down. The way out of that danger is by the losing of the soul. This is beautifully illustrated in the action of Peter when he recognized the risen Lord Jesus by the lake-side. Though with the others he had returned to his former employment, there was now no thought of the ship, nor even of the net full of fishes so miraculously provided. When he heard John's cry of recognition: "it is the Lord", we read that "he cast himself into the sea".

That is true detachment. The question at issue is always, Where is my heart? The cross has to work in us a true spiritual detachment from anything and anyone outside of the Lord Himself.

But, even here, we are as yet only dealing with the more outward aspects of the soul's activity. The soul giving rein to its affections, the soul asserting itself and trying to manipulate things, the soul becoming preoccupied with things, the soul becoming preoccupied with things on the earth: these are still small things, and do not yet touch the real heart of the matter. There is something which is deeper yet, and which I will try now to explain.

THE CROSS AND FRUITFULNESS

Let us read again John 12:24, 25. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life (Greek 'soul', as in the above passages) loseth it; and he that hateth his life ('soul') in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

Here we have the inward working of the Cross of which we have been speaking—the losing of the soul—linked with and likened to that aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus Himself which we have already seen depicted in the grain of wheat, namely, His death with a view to increase. The end in view is fruitfulness. There is a grain of wheat with life in it, but "it abideth alone". It

has the power to impart its life to others; but to do so it must go down into death.

Now we know the way the Lord Jesus took. He passed into death, and, as we saw earlier, His life emerged in many lives. The Son died, and came forth as the first of “many sons”. He let go His life that we might receive it. It is in this aspect of His death that we are called to die. It is here that He makes clear the value of conformity to His death, which is that we lose our own natural life, our soul, in order that we may become life-imparters, sharing thereafter with others the new life of God which is in us. This is the secret of ministry, the path of real fruitfulness to God. As Paul says: “We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you” (2 Cor. 4:11, 12).

We are coming to our point. There is new life in us, if we have received Christ. We all have that precious possession, the treasure in the vessel. Praise the Lord for the reality of His life within us! But why is there so little expression of that life? Why is there an ‘abiding alone’? Why is it not overflowing and imparting life to others? Why is it scarcely making itself apparent even in our own lives? The reason why there is so little sign of life where life is present is that the soul in us is enveloping and confining that life (as the husk envelopes the grain of wheat) so that it cannot find outlet. We are living in the soul; we are working and serving in our own natural strength; we are not drawing from God. It is the soul that stands in the way of the springing up of life. Lose it; for that way lies fullness.

A DARK NIGHT—A RESURRECTION MORN

So we come back to the almond rod, which was brought into the sanctuary for a night—a dark night in which there was nothing to be seen—and then in the morning it budded. There you have set forth the death and resurrection, the life yielded up and the life fained, and there you have the ministry attested. But how does this work out in practice? How do I recognize that God is dealing with me in this way?

First we must be clear about one thing: the soul with its fund of natural energy and resource will continue with us until our death. Till then there will be an unending day-by-day need for the Cross to operate in us, dredging

deeply that well-spring of nature. This is the lifelong condition of service that is laid down in the words: “Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). We never get past that. He who evades it “is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:38); he “cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). Death and resurrection must remain an abiding principle of our lives for the losing of the soul and the uprising of the Spirit.

Yet here too there may be a crisis that, once reached and passed, can transform our whole life and service for God. It is a wicket gate by which we may enter upon an entirely new pathway. Such a crisis occurred in the life of Jacob at Peniel. It was the ‘natural man’ in Jacob that was seeking to serve God and to attain His end. Jacob knew well that God had said: “The elder shall serve the younger”, but he was trying to compass that end through his own ingenuity and resource. God had to cripple that strength of nature in Jacob, and that He did when He touched the sinew of Jacob’s thigh. Jacob continued to walk thereafter, but he continued to be lame. He was a different Jacob, as his change of name implies. He had his feet and he could use them, but the strength had been touched, and he limped from an injury from which he would never quite recover.

God must bring us to a point—I cannot tell you how it will be, but He will do it—where, through a deep and dark experience, our natural power is touched and fundamentally weakened, so that we no longer dare trust ourselves. He has had to deal with some of us very harshly, and take us through difficult and painful ways, in order to get us there. At length there comes a time when we no longer ‘like’ to do Christian work—indeed we almost dread to do things in the Lord’s Name. But then at last it is that He can begin to use us.

I can tell you this, that for a year after I was converted I had a lust to preach. It was impossible to stay silent. It was as though there was something moving within me that drove me forward, and I had to keep going. Preaching had become my very life. The Lord may graciously allow you to go on a long while like that—and not only so but with a fair measure of blessing—until one day that natural force impelling you is touched, and from then on you no longer do it because you want to do it but because the Lord wants it. Before that experience you preached for the sake of satisfaction you got from serving God in that way; and yet sometimes the Lord could not move you to do one thing that He wanted done. You were living by the natural life, and that life varies a

good deal. It is the slave of your temperament. When emotionally you are set on His way you go ahead at full speed, but when your emotions are directed the other way you are reluctant to move at all, even when duty calls. You are not pliable in the Lord's hands. He has therefore to weaken that strength of preference, of like and dislike, in you, until you will do a thing because He wants it and not because you like it. You may enjoy it or you may not, but you will do it just the same. It is not that you can derive a certain satisfaction from preaching or from doing this or that work for God, and therefore you do it. No, you do it now because it is the will of God, and regardless of whether or not it gives you conscious joy. The true joy you know in doing His will lies deeper than your variable emotions.

God is bringing you to the place where He has but to express a wish and you respond instantly. That is the spirit of the Servant (Psalm 40:7, 8), but such a spirit does not come naturally to any of us. It comes only when our soul, the seat of our natural energy and will and affections, has known the touch of the Cross. Yet such a servant-spirit is what He seeks and will have in us all. The way to it may be a painful, long-drawn-out process with some of us, or it may be just one stroke; but God has His ways and we must have regard to them.

Every true servant of God must know at some time that disabling from which he can never recover; he can never be quite the same again. There must be that established in you which means that from henceforth you will really fear yourself. You will fear to do anything 'out from' yourself, for, like Jacob, you know what kind of sovereign dealing you will incur if you do it; you know what a bad time you will have in your own heart before the Lord if you move out on the impulse of your soul. You have known something of the chastening hand of a loving God upon you, a God who "dealeth with you as with sons" (Heb. 12:7). The Spirit Himself bears witness in your spirit to that relationship, and to the inheritance and glory that are ours "if so be that we suffer with him" (Rom. 8:16, 17); and your response to the 'Father of our spirits' is: "Abba, Father".

But when this is really established in you, you have come to a new place which we speak of as 'resurrection ground'. Death in principle may have had to be wrought out to a crisis in your natural life, but when it has, then you find God releases you into resurrection. You discover that what you have lost is coming back—though not as before. The principle of life is at work in you now—something that empowers and strengthens you, something that

animates you, giving you life. From henceforth what you have lost will be brought back—but now under discipline, under control.

Let me make this quite clear again. If we want to be spiritual people, there is no need for us to amputate our hands or feet; we can still have our body. In the same way we can have our soul, with the full use of its faculties; and yet the soul is not now our life-spring. We are no longer living in it, we are no longer drawing from it and living by it; we use it. When the body becomes our life we live like beasts. When the soul becomes our life we live as rebels and fugitives from God—gifted, cultured, educated, no doubt, but alienated from the life of God. But when we come to live our life in the Spirit and by the Spirit, though we still use our soul faculties just as we do our physical faculties, they are now the servants of the Spirit; and when we have reached that point God can really use us.

But the difficulty with many of us is that dark night. The Lord graciously laid me aside once in my life for a number of months and put me, spiritually, into utter darkness. It was almost as though He had forsaken me—almost as though nothing was going on and I had really come to the end of everything. And then by degrees He brought things back again. The temptation is always to try to help God by taking things back ourselves; but remember, there must be a full night in the sanctuary—a full night in darkness. It cannot be hurried; He knows what He is doing.

We would like to have death and resurrection put together within one hour of each other. We cannot face the thought that God will keep us aside for so long a time; we cannot bear to wait. And I cannot tell you how long He will take, but in principle I think it is quite safe to say this, that there will be a definite period when He will keep you there. It will seem as though nothing is happening; everything you valued is slipping from your grasp. There confronts you a blank wall with no door in it. Seemingly everyone else is being blessed and used, while you yourself have been passed by and are losing out. Lie quiet. All is in darkness, but it is only for a night. It must indeed be a full night, but that is all. Afterwards you will find that everything is given back to you in glorious resurrection; and nothing can measure the difference between what was before and what now is!

I was sitting one day at supper with a young brother to whom the Lord had been speaking on this very question of our natural energy. He said to me, 'It is

a blessed thing when you know the Lord has met you and touched you in that fundamental way, and that disabling touch has been received.’ There was a plate of biscuits between us on the table, and I picked one up and broke it in half as though to eat it. Then, fitting the two pieces together again carefully, I said, ‘It looks all right, but it is never quite the same again, is it? When once your back is broken, you will yield ever after to the slightest touch from God.’

That is it. The Lord knows what He is doing with His own, and He has left no aspect of our need unmet in His Cross, that the glory of the Son may be manifested in the sons. Disciples who have gone this way can, I believe, truly echo the words of the apostle Paul, who could claim to serve God “in my spirit in the gospel of his Son” (Rom. 1:9). They have learned, as he had, the secret of such a ministry: “We... worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

Few can have led a more active life than Paul’s. To the Romans he puts it on record that he has preached the Gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Rom. 15:19) and that he is ready now to go on to Rome (1:10) and thence, if possible, to Spain (15:24, 28). Yet in all this service, embracing as it does the whole Mediterranean world, his heart is set on one object only—the uplifting of the One who has made it all possible. “I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed” (Rom. 15:17, 18). That is spiritual service.

May God make each one of us, as truly as he was, “a bondservant of Jesus Christ”.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LEARNING THE LESSON OF THE CROSS

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 43:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (3), Chap. 83

Scripture Reading: Jer. 48:11

THE WAY TO REMOVE THE LEES BEING TO BE EMPTIED CONTINUOUSLY

In Jeremiah 48:11 God said, "Moab has been at ease from his youth;/And he is settled on his lees/And has not been emptied from vessel to vessel;.../Therefore his taste remains in him,/And his scent is not changed." Moab was like wine. His lees remained, his taste stayed the same, and his scent was not changed, because he was never emptied.

Today Christians are filled with lees. This is why God has to pour them from vessel to vessel. If you have never been emptied and if your taste still remains, you are not of much use in the hand of the Lord. In order to perfect us, God must continually empty us. Many times when a task is about to be finished, we find God forcing us to start everything all over again. We expect days of ease, and we want to keep God out of our territory. Day by day we pray for days of peace. But even while we are thinking this, something happens at home, in the church, or among the brothers and sisters. If we do not think about peace, we may have peace. But as soon as we think about it, trouble comes! God is emptying us to purify us. After we are purified once, He empties us again. After we are purified a second time, He empties us a third time. God will not allow us to remain settled on our lees. He continues to empty us.

If we do not humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and if there is no joy in us, the lees within us will never be purified. But if we submit and our hearts rejoice, we will find that all of God's dealings are necessary for us. If we accept what God has measured to us, we will be purified from the lees through our willingness to accept, submit, and be poured out. God has placed many undesirable things in our pathway. If we submit to His arrangement, we will

be purified again and again. However, if we do not submit and instead react inwardly to His arrangement, then lees will remain within us, and our taste and scent will remain un- changed.

God allows us to experience shame, pain, and mishaps in the church, at work, and in our homes. These are the crosses that God has given us. They are there for us to learn the lesson of bearing the cross, denying the self, and submitting to God. When we are faced with these things, we should say to the Lord, "Since it pleases You to give me days of affliction, I am happy to pass my days in affliction. If it pleases You that I suffer, I will never ask for ease." We have to learn to satisfy God's heart. We are not only those who believe in the Lord but also those who love Him. The only question we need to ask about anything is whether or not God is pleased with it. Are we living for God? If we are, what more can we say if a thing pleases the Lord? John Bunyan said, "God, if it pleases You that I go to hell, I will jump into it this very moment!" We do not live for ourselves but for God.

A RAW CHRISTIAN AND A MATURE CHRISTIAN

There are two kinds of Christians: raw Christians and mature Christians. Most Christians who are saved have not yet experienced God's dealings. They speak and walk as freely as before. When they argue with others, they want to return an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Before they were saved, they lost their temper when they were unhappy. Now that they are saved, they still lose their temper when they are angry. These are raw Christians. They have not learned the proper lessons before the Lord. Their will has never been broken, and they have never been humbled under the mighty hand of God; they have never been disciplined by the Lord.

After a Christian has passed through God's dealings, he will spontaneously accept God's discipline in the environment. When God directs his pathway with the chastening whip, he will go along with all the lessons that God gives to him. This is a mature Christian. The Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey's colt which no man had yet sat upon (Mark 11:2). A donkey is very difficult to ride on, more difficult than an elephant, horse, or camel. If the little animal has a fit of temperament, no one can push or pull it. A donkey is an animal with a terrible and stubborn temperament. A donkey's colt that has never been disciplined and trained is an absolutely wild animal. It was born

free and has never carried anyone on its back. It walks and eats according to its own way; it is not tame. A tame donkey's colt is one that has been disciplined and chastised. Someone has been running, subduing, pulling, and directing the way it should take. This is the difference between being raw and being tamed. The Lord has to work on most Christians like working on a donkey's colt before He can use them. But we like to choose our own way. Those who choose their own way are raw Christians. However, no matter how raw we are, when the Lord wants to use us, He can ride on us. If we have never been disciplined and chastised, we will never be useful.

GOD'S DISCIPLINE FOR OUR PARTAKING OF HIS HOLINESS

In order for us to partake of His holiness and glory, and in order for us to learn to express the life of Christ, God chastises us and disciplines us all the time (Heb. 12:7, 10). He loves us and desires that we become useful vessels fit for His use.

In our eyes, some people are quite useless, yet God has put them among us. What is His purpose for doing this? These ones serve a very important purpose. When they are around, there is the cross. Without them, we have no cross. God is removing our "rawness" through the cross so that we can be mature.

We should learn submission through our environment and should never be rebellious in our hearts. If we are rebellious, we may not say it with our mouth, but there will be complaints and anger within. Once we rebel and struggle, we will lose the cross that the Lord has measured to us. The Lord puts all these things before us so that we will learn to be mature Christians. In order for a diamond to shine and become a precious treasure, there is the need for little grains of sand to rub against it. God has begotten many Christians who, in our eyes, are good at nothing except reviling and criticizing. Thank God that He is using these little stones to polish us! We are gems, but we are embedded in rocks and cannot shine. God is polishing us with little stones so that we can become a shining and radiant treasure.

There are some people who are naturally good and patient. But their goodness has never been dealt with by the cross. This goodness is not the result of lessons learned from God. A person may not resist once, twice, or

even many times; outwardly he may appear to be very meek. But when he finally loses his temper, no one will be able to control it because his patience was raw; it did not issue from a mature life.

If a man is born with a very bad temper, yet learns to bear the cross, and through the cross develops patience before the Lord, his patience is far more precious than any natural patience. May the Lord grant us the grace to be those who learn to bear the cross. No matter how hard our circumstances may be and no matter how much burden, shame, and pain we bear, we should accept them gladly if we know that this is God's desire. We should weep before the Lord rather than run away or avoid the cross that the Lord has given us. Once we run away, our pain may go away, but so will the carving work that perfects us into a vessel of the Lord.

May the Lord carve us, and may we accept His carving and polishing work through the environment He has given us. May we learn to bear the cross and be dealt with by Him. If we do this, God will perform a great miracle in us, and our disposition and character will receive great perfecting through the operation of the cross.

CHAPTER NINE

THE CROSS AND THE WINE

MINGLED WITH GALL

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 37:

General Messages (1), Chap. 17

Scripture Reading: Matt. 27:34; Luke 23:33-34

When the Lord Jesus was led by man to Golgotha where he was about to be crucified, "They gave Him wine to drink, mingled with gall. And when He tasted it, He would not drink" (Matt. 27:34). At that time the punishment of the cross was the most agonizing kind of punishment; therefore, the law in those days permitted giving the one who was going to be crucified wine mingled with gall to drink. Although wine mingled with gall was not as good as the anesthetics that surgeons use today, at that time it was the substance that best alleviated the pain in one's senses.

ONE

The Lord Jesus was very distinctive here in that He would not drink wine mingled with gall. When others were crucified, they all wanted to drink wine mingled with gall; only the Lord Jesus would not drink it when He was crucified. There was bitter feeling with the crosses of men, so they all needed wine mingled with gall to remove the pain in their senses. But in the cross of the Lord Jesus, wine mingled with gall was refused. If one is crucified and also drinks wine mingled with gall, then it will be a cross of man and not the cross of our Lord. In the cross of our Lord, there is not such a thing as wine mingled with gall; there was no need for it. Man sent wine mingled with gall to His lips. After tasting it, He also knew that it was wine mingled with gall and that it could alleviate His pain, but He would not drink it.

At this point we should ask the reason for the Lord's refusal. The cross produced a bitter feeling in others, but it did not produce such a feeling in the Lord Jesus. (This does not refer to physical feeling; physically, He also had feeling.) Because others were full of feelings, there was a need for wine

mingled with gall. But here was a person who, on the spiritual side, did not harbor any bitter feelings when He was crucified, so He did not need wine mingled with gall.

According to Luke, when the Lord was on the cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (23:34). This is what is meant by having no need of wine mingled with gall. Here was a man who was wrongfully accused, afflicted, scourged, shamed, persecuted, rejected, judged, and even condemned by men. He was abused by men to the uttermost, but at this point He lifted up His head and said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." He had no feeling of bitterness within, nor the feeling of being wrongfully accused, nor the feeling of being persecuted; therefore, He needed no wine mingled with gall. A person who has no feeling of bitterness within does not need wine mingled with gall to alleviate his pain.

TWO

Those who harbor a feeling of bitterness, who need wine mingled with gall, are those who will not bear the cross. Many children of God apparently seem to be bearing the cross but are not doing so in reality. Bearing the cross requires no consolation and joy outside of God. But when many bear the cross, the ones living next door know all about it. If those upstairs bear the cross, the ones living downstairs know about it. When it comes to many people, their countenance, expression, and voice tell people: "Look! I am here bearing the cross." We should realize that if the news of the existence of a cross leaks out, it is not a cross. Whenever the news leaks out, there is no cross. The news that leaks out is wine mingled with gall. Human beings are prone to seek comfort, love, and sympathy from others upon suffering even a little pain. We do not know how innumerable are those who thirst for these things, but this is not the cross. A great problem among God's children is that God is not their joy. Therefore, they seek joy outside of God. God cannot satisfy their heart, and therefore, they need to seek comfort outside of God. This is wine mingled with gall. This is not something that belongs to the cross.

When God's children suffer, there are perhaps three different kinds of feelings. Some react outwardly toward men; some turn inward; and some suppress their feelings. Those who react toward men become angry with others, hate others, and do not forgive them. Those who turn their feelings

inward become hurt and pity themselves, supposing that they are following the Lord and that they are suffering very much like the Lord. Those who suppress their feelings become passive. We easily become angry; we easily pity ourselves; and we easily become passive. Some of God's children think that being passive is being victorious. Little do they know that the passive ones, in their feelings, also expect wine mingled with gall. Passivity is another expression of being hurt. Because one is despairing within, he becomes passive; because he expects too much, he becomes passive. Passivity proves that there is no cross; it is only the forcible suppression of one's feelings.

Among God's children, some do suffer, but there are not many who really bear the cross. When they are suffering, they express themselves in a few different ways. Someone may think that since he is a Christian, he is supposed to suffer. Outwardly he says nothing, and he really looks like a cross-bearing Christian, but secretly he is murmuring. Such persons, who murmur a great deal after they have suffered, still do not know what the cross is because inwardly they are filled with bitter feelings; they need wine mingled with gall.

Some people do not murmur when they suffer. There is neither spoken nor silent murmuring. Yet they weep. We must realize that the cross is a place where the blood is shed and the body is sacrificed; the cross is not the place of weeping and self-pity. Those who pity themselves and weep are those who do not know the cross. Weeping means that one is not willing to see himself suffer. Only those at the foot of the cross weep; those who are on the cross have no tears. If a person feels hurt after enduring a little pain or suffers after incurring a little loss, he still does not know what the cross is.

There is also another kind of person who is puffed up with pride and pretends to be an overcomer. This person is not a crucified person either because his kind of reaction is for gaining people's attention. He seems to be saying, "Though I suffer, I can still sing hymns and still give praise; I am a cross-bearer." The purpose of his behavior is to gain man's admiration. This is also wine mingled with gall; this is not bearing the cross either.

Some do not bear the cross in reality but are very capable of talking about the cross. They consider that this encounter is an experience of the cross, and that incidence is also an experience of the cross. This happening is a cross, and that happening is also a cross. What these persons expect is the pity of men. Their heart is grieved only because no one pities them. Their eyes are

always looking around them for some to come and pity them. These persons crave wine mingled with gall; they are not crucified.

THREE

Then what is the cross?

The cross is not turning one's feelings toward others; it is not turning one's feelings inward or suppressing one's feelings. The cross is a matter of joyful acceptance; it is for a person to thank God saying, "The path that God has chosen for me is all good. I can be glad, I can give thanks, and I have no problems because I receive from God's hand the cross that He has given me."

The cross forgives; it does not pity itself, and it is not passive. The only feeling the cross gives us is a feeling of thanksgiving to the Lord.

The cross is a matter of having a soft heart before God. Whatever God wishes, let it be so. It is a matter of knowing that God is great and that God is also love.

The real bearing of the cross will only result in others' respect; it will not seek man's pity. Whenever one seeks man's pity and whenever one seeks man's comfort, that is only wine mingled with gall and not the cross. Our Lord was crucified on the cross, and therefore the cross becomes a place where we worship the Lord. The Lord's cross was at Golgotha, and therefore Golgotha becomes the center of our praises to the Lord. If a brother is suffering for the Lord on the cross, we will kiss his hands and his feet for the Lord. But he is not a cross-bearer if he expects this and that while enduring the pain of the cross.

Our Lord refused wine mingled with gall for the simple reason that He did not need man's help. He did not need man's help because He already had God's joy in Him. The cross means rejoicing within and being able to praise God within. Therefore, a cross-bearer can comfort others. Paul said, "Who comforts us in all our affliction that we may be able to comfort those who are in every affliction through the comforting with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:4). A person such as Paul is one who can comfort other people because no difficulty can touch him. We have seen that Paul and Silas could pray and sing hymns to praise God in their affliction in Philippi

(Acts 16:25). These two men needed no wine mingled with gall; they were men who were really crucified on the cross. Stephen could still ask God to forgive the people when he was being stoned (Acts 7:59-60). He did not feel any pain for himself; he needed no wine mingled with gall. He was really a crucified person. The cross means that no matter what pain or difficulty befalls you, you are not touched by it; on the contrary, you can still praise God. If you are always considering how heavy or difficult a matter is, there is no cross.

May God show us daily what the cross is, and may we know how the cross does not need wine mingled with gall. May God save us from seeking wine mingled with gall and enable us to rejoice and praise on account of Him.

CHAPTER TEN

THE VERDICT OF DEATH

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Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 1:8-10

DEALING WITH THE NATURAL LIFE

We must realize that a Christian possesses everything that he should receive at the time of his regeneration. Through regeneration a Christian receives a new life. God does not mend the natural life; He does not repair the old life. The natural life and the old life are the very sphere of the cross's operation. God's intention is to give the natural life and the old life a fundamental and final blow.

Esau was a sinner who was moral, whereas Jacob was a supplanter who feared God. He wanted spiritual blessings and God's presence but was very natural. He did not deny himself, and his maneuvering, energy, and cleverness were always with him. This is why God had to give him a fundamental blow at Peniel. Any blow from God that allows us to resume our former condition cannot be considered a fundamental blow.

Jacob sought for blessing, yet he had to flee. He wanted to be the firstborn, yet he had to leave his family and parents. After God touched the hollow of his thigh at Peniel, he became lame forever. From that point on, he limped whenever he moved. The strength of his natural life was thoroughly dealt with by God. Many people receive revelation and light after they have been dealt with. But the degree of the power that is produced from this touch depends on how deeply God has touched us. We need God's light to expose our true nature. Once it is exposed, we are no longer able to return to or recover our old condition. This is what we mean by a fundamental blow. A fundamental dealing means that there is no returning to our former condition.

THE VERDICT OF DEATH

Everyone has to pass through death. As soon as a man is born, he is heading in the direction of death. But before death actually comes to a man, he may not feel the power of death. He may never have thought of death until a doctor tells him that he is terminally ill with tuberculosis. Then there is an immediate "verdict of death." This does not mean that there was no death prior to this point. It merely means that he did not see the imminence and reality of death. But when he sees it, he is crushed. Many people know the doctrine of the cross, and they can even preach it. Nevertheless, the cross is a fuzzy subject to them. But once God touches them and they hear the verdict of death, the cross becomes real to them. Once God touches a man, he becomes crippled. Lameness is a mark of God's drastic operation on man.

GOD'S DOCTRINES VERSUS GOD'S LIGHT

There is a great difference between God's doctrines and God's light. Jacob met God; he was touched by Him, dealt with by Him, and became lame. Acting lame does not work. Those who act lame may limp when they think about it, but when they are fighting to get on a bus, they forget about their "lameness." This kind of "lameness" is only a change in conduct; it is not a change in life. Those who are truly lame can do nothing but limp. Neither those who are running nor those who are pretending to be lame have been touched by God. God's children today are filled with behavior because podiums are filled with doctrines, and doctrines produce nothing but artificial behavior.

I have seen God crippling men who were quite strong, and I believe that He can cripple us too. He will take away our confidence in ourselves so that we will no longer trust in ourselves. This is the verdict of death. A day will come when God will deal with us in a severe way. He will pronounce a verdict of death on us. Then we will be able to say that everything is of God. What we have today is not of God, and what we had before was not of God. But when we are touched this way, our denial of the self will be spontaneous, and our prayer will flow out in a most unpretentious way. Those who are touched by God do not need to set anything to memory. Those who are truly lame may forget about their lameness, but as soon as they take a step and try to walk as others do, they find that they are crippled. They fall at the first step. Our mind may forget that we are lame, but our legs will never forget that we are lame. The cross is God's greatest destruction; it has destroyed the whole old

creation. This destruction comes from the operation of light, and this drastic work forever removes any hope of recovery.

DOCTRINE VERSUS LIGHT

The verdict of death that we are speaking of here does not refer to death itself; rather, it refers to the reality, inevitability, and unavoidability of the work of death in man. This verdict removes man's trust in himself and turns him to God alone. But we have two questions: How do we know whether we have received this light, and how do we know whether God has done this work in us? We have to know what is doctrine and what is light. If someone tells us about something and then we have to do it ourselves, we have received a doctrine. But when revelation and light touches us, it produces an immediate effect. For example, if the doctor says that you are seriously sick, he will immediately take you to the operation room. God's word is powerful, because when He says, "Let there be light," there is light. God does not say, "Let there be light," and then ask us to go and find light or create light. It is a characteristic of spiritual things that as soon as God says something, it is done. We do not have to worry about how God does a work; we only need to worry whether God has spoken. It is wrong for the ears to pick up something and for the hands to try to act upon it. As soon as Paul saw God's great light, he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6, KJV). God did not preach to him, yet he was able to ask such a question. Much of our problem lies in the fact that we do not know what we should do. There is no short cut, and no doctrine can substitute for light.

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF LIGHT

A brother from Mongolia once stayed in Shanghai for eight months. When he was ready to leave, he asked me to lay hands on him and to send him out for the work. I did not do it. Later he went to Tientsin and wrote a letter to me telling me all the things he had seen while he was in Shanghai. After I read the letter, I became very angry and tore the letter apart. I said in my heart, "What do you really know?" If someone says that he has fallen from a seven-story building and tells you exactly what was going on every second during the fall, he must be lying. The most skillful liars will say the same thing every time. Paul related his story three times, and every time it was different. This is because the light confused him. Before he received the light, he was able to ride a horse; but afterwards, he could only proceed by allowing others to hold

his hand. He could no longer tell the east from the west or the north from the south. One characteristic of being enlightened is becoming unclear. Abraham's virtue rested in his ignorance; he could not do anything but wait for God's instructions. The first result of all spiritual revelation is confusion. This is absolutely opposite to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil makes one clear. But one begins to trust in God when he is in a state of confusion.

SPIRITUAL FACTS

Spiritual matters have nothing to do with doctrines; they have to do with facts. Mental apprehension, anxiety, or concern have no place in spiritual things. What counts are the facts. All that matters is whether or not there are the facts. The more a person asks questions, the more it proves that he is in darkness. When a man has the light, he will see. He sees because he is in the light. All problems will go away when he sees. But if he does not have the light, he will ask all kinds of questions. He will ask about the color or shape of an object. But these questions will disappear once he has the light and sees. Spiritual confusion does not lead to doubt, but doctrines lead to questionings. We need a fundamental dealing, a genuine shining, and a thorough blow from the cross. Only the verdict of death will result in the genuine denial of the self; only then will we trust in God, not in ourselves.