

Excerpts from the book

Born Crucified

By L. E. Maxwell

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Contents

Preface	3
Finding Life Out of Death	4
The Cross and Self	5
The Cross – Contrary to Nature	7
The Cross and the Flesh	8
The Cross and Relationships	11
The Cross and the Will of God	12
The Cross and Self-will	15
The Cross and Fruitfulness	18
The Cross and Attainment	20
The Cross and Satan	22
The Cross and Kingship	23
The Cross and the Crown	25
The Cross and Methods	28

Preface

L. E. Maxwell wrote the original book “to set forth...in simple exhortation, ‘The Cross in the Life of the Believer.’” We have condensed the material into short devotional readings to help Christians in our day understand the function of the cross in the believer’s life. There needs to be a much better understanding of how to “find” the divine spiritual life of Christ by following Him through the cross. (Matt. 16:24-25) Christianity is not merely a belief in words. It is a way of walking by the Spirit of God that enables us to share with Christ in “the power of an endless life.” (Heb. 7:16)

While there may be appearances of vitality within certain parts of the church, very few believers are truly reigning with Christ in His overcoming life. Many church members are still bound to an earthly plane of existence by the things of this world. Because the cross is not being preached, it has not had an opportunity to work as God had planned. Very few Christians are finding our Lord’s Kingdom-life of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17).

Christ was lifted by the resurrection power of the Spirit into the highest place of usefulness because He was willing to sink into the depths of the Cross. He revealed the “mind” that believers will need to possess before the church can function as He intended. We can only share with Him in the power of His resurrection as we die with Him to self-will and begin living by His Spirit.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. (Rom. 6:5)

There is a tendency to avoid a serious study of the implications of the cross because it seems to depict suffering leading to lifelessness. But we want to remind our readers how it actually leads to divine life in the heavenly realms. Before beginning our study it may be helpful to consider what A. W. Tozer has said in *The Divine Conquest* about this matter of passing through the cross and into the life and power of the resurrection.

The truth is that God has never planned that His children should live forever stretched upon a cross. Christ Himself endured His cross for only six hours. When the cross had done its work life entered and took over. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him... His joyful resurrection followed hard upon His joyless crucifixion. But the first had to come before

the second. The life that halts short of the cross is but a fugitive and condemned thing, doomed at last to be lost beyond recovery. That life which goes to the cross and loses itself there to rise again with Christ is a divine and deathless treasure... The man who takes his cross and follows Christ will soon find that his direction is away from the sepulcher. Death is behind him and a joyous and increasing life before.

The Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted. We have also added italics for emphasis and inserted bracketed comments for clarification. We encourage everyone to search their own Bibles to see if the things we have said have *their source* in God.

Finding Life Out Of Death

God's way of victory over the flesh is to completely cut off the old Adamic tree. His purpose is to graft us into the life of Christ by uniting us with Him in His death. The cross meant one thing to Him, "Not my will, but yours be done." And because He followed this course of dying to self-will to the end, He now has an eternal Kingdom-life in bodily form to share with everyone who follows Him in His way of the cross.

For the death that He died, He died to sin {self-will} once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (Rom. 6:10)

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me {into the same life}, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

The Gospel message is all about finding life out of death. Has the reader labored and agonized to please God? And yet, in spite of all your efforts to follow His instructions, you still find yourself being held back by a fleshly nature. There is a way to get beyond it.

Christ's requirements are indeed unattainable. His demands go far beyond what the natural man can fulfill. Who naturally loves his enemies, rejoices in persecution, and goes the second mile? But this way of life is natural to those who have received "abundance of grace" and "the gift of righteousness" where they "reign in life" with Christ. (Rom. 5:17)

There is an impassable gulf between the humanly possible and the requirements of Christ. F. J. Huegel, in *Bone of His Bone*, rightly summarizes our failure: "We have been proceeding upon a false basis. We have conceived

of the Christian life as an imitation of Christ. It is not an imitation of Christ. It is a participation of Christ.” “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” (John 6:63)

Having been born from above, our citizenship is in Heaven. We have been “spiritually disfranchised of the world.” Christ plainly states, “Ye are not of the world.” We have been crucified to the world and the world to us. (Gal. 6:14) This death to the old form of life is what provides access through faith to life in the heavenly realms. “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God... For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col. 3:1, 3)

There is an abundant fullness in the life of Christ. The Lord Jesus yearns to fill the temple of the body with His life and glory. (John 17:22-23, 26) He has a crucified, resurrected life that is obedient unto death under the severest temptations and testings.

But we cannot experience this truth of our union with Christ in death and resurrection by a mere lip profession or determined assertion. This life cannot be copied. No imitation will avail. There must be a living participation by the Spirit through a death to the old self-life. I find the new life as I refuse the old—at the Cross. “Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” As I reckon myself dead to my own will so I may be led by His Spirit, I am in a place to be lifted beyond death and into “the likeness of his resurrection.”

A crossless relationship with Christ brings no vital union with Him. In order to find His life we must be joined to Him. And the place we are joined to Him is in His death. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal. 2:20) Sink your life into His, and let Him be your life, your light, your victory, your all.

The Cross and Self

The church world has workers who are manifesting gifts of the Spirit. They are bringing blessings to others. But when they are observed “close up” we find they are still like the Corinthians—they remain full of self. They may think they are prepared to follow Jesus in His way of the cross. But like Peter before Pentecost, when it comes down to reality, they are fleeing the cross.

Such persons may wonder, all the while, why they do not have victory over their wounded pride, or why they are so touchy and contentious, or why they fail to enjoy Christ’s “rivers of living water.” Ah, the secret is not far away. They secretly and habitually practice “shrine worship” at the shrine of

self. They are fundamental. They are willing to glory in the outward cross. But inwardly they worship another god—they continue to serve a pitied, petted and pampered self-life.

Self has usurped Christ's throne. The Son is not ruling. Self is the false center upon which their hope is fixed. Even their best deeds are but refined forms of self-righteousness. Everything is wrapped in the filthy rags of secret selfishness.

When this nearly almighty self unseated and dethroned El Shaddai at the Fall, what could God do? He was scarcely taken by surprise. Yet how could He undo this tragedy of all tragedies? How was He to unhinge and tear man loose from his foul and false self-infatuation? Herein is displayed the genius of God. The Cross is indeed "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Calvary is God's axe laid at the root of the first family tree. Once the old Adam is cut off, the New Adam is able to ascend to His throne.

God does not leave man to crucify himself. Such a task is too tremendous, too divine. But we must sign our own death sentence. Everyone must go into their own Garden of Gethsemane and make their choice to deny and dethrone self at the Cross. Those who will follow Jesus can then depend on God to take the matter out of their hands and accomplish what needs to be done. Our only responsibility is to continue to yield.

The Cross is indeed God's master-weapon. But it is only effective as we submit in faith to the leading of His Spirit. As the Son died to His own will once for all and lives to God, we are to reckon ourselves as being dead to our own wills so we may live wholly for the will of God. (Rom. 6:10-11) "But now having been set free from sin {self-will}, *and having become slaves of God* {to live for His will alone}, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." (Rom. 6:22)

Such a denial of self is not a mere severing of this or that indulgence, but putting the axe of the Cross to the very root of the self-life. God says, cut the tree down, not merely trim it back. All self-righteousness, self-esteem, self-vindication, self-glory, and self-pity—these and ten thousand other manifestations are but the carnal fruit that grow on the many branches of that deeply rooted tree of self. To trim it back does nothing more than cause the self-life to rise up from the roots in some other branch.

Outwardly the religious man may appear from a distance to be a beautiful tree that has become highly esteemed among men. But those who live close to him are able to see the carnal fruit still growing on the branches. This carnality must not be permitted to live.

George Mueller found the secret for finding life from God. He said, “There was a day when I died... died to George Mueller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of my brethren or friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.”

The Cross—Contrary to Nature

It scarcely dawns upon us, even as God’s children, that God’s plan is to “cross” out the old race of Adam entirely. He says: “Behold, I make all things new.” And in the infinite wisdom and power of God, He chose the Cross as the means for contradicting and doing away with the fallen race of Adam—“that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

The Cross contradicts our wills: Christ said, “Not My will, but Yours be done.” The Cross contradicts wisdom: For the message of the cross is foolish to “the wise and learned.” The Cross contradicts our affections: “Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” The Cross contradicts our pride: Those who have the mind of Christ are willing to be humbled and be of “no reputation.” The Cross contradicts self: “One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves.”

The Cross contradicts human nature at every point. It leaves no room for the old man to escape. The unalterable terms of discipleship are plain and simple: “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:27, 33) To become a follower of Christ and to receive divine life from above will entail dying to the old self-originated and self-directed form of life.

It is God’s master-stroke to undo and drain away our natural life, that His divine life may take its place. “Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” Christ came not to straighten us out, but to “cross” us out; not to trim us back, but to cut us off.

Christ did not do anything out from Himself. He did everything through the Spirit. His instruction to follow Him in His way of the cross can be nothing short of a termination of the old self-originated form of life.

We need to again observe that self-denial is no mere cutting off of an indulgence here and there, but, as A. T. Pierson said, “laying the axe at the

root of the tree of self, of which all indulgences are only greater or smaller branches. Self-righteousness and self-trust, self-seeking and self-pleasing, self-will, self-defense, self-glory—these are a few of the myriad branches of that deeply rooted tree. And what if one or more of these be cut off, if such lopping off of some few branches only throws back into others the self-life to develop more vigorously in them?” Until the axe, then, is laid to the root of the tree of self, and the old self-originated form of life gives place to the life of the Spirit, all our “virtues are only taught practices grafted upon a corrupt bottom.”

F. J. Huegel says, “We are so addicted to self, so wrapped up in self, so entwined with self, so infatuated with self, that our spiritual natures cannot be centered on God by means of a deep union of love without a violent contradiction of our old natures. This is the secret of the Cross. It does violence to corrupt human nature. It slays the old life.”

But, thanks be to God, this coming to the end of self is no lifelong funeral procession. Nay, verily, “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.” (Rom. 6:5)

Thank God there is a divine life in Christ that is able to set us free indeed: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son...that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:2-4)

The Cross and The Flesh

Man’s emotions, his reasonings, his powers—all his thinking and willing and energy—are under the power of the flesh. Fallen man naturally lives by the flesh. And this is what keeps him from living by the Spirit. The flesh-life is not limited to gross sins. It is everything that is self-originated. You cannot live by the Spirit while living “out from” self. And so this life from the flesh must die. “Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:24-25)

In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of

disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind... (Eph. 2:2-3)

After choosing to follow Christ, we begin to see the various forms of the flesh that still need to be dealt with. In our service there will be self-confidence and self-esteem; in the slightest forms of suffering there will be self-saving and self-vindication; in our daily activities there will be self-pleasing and self-choosing; in our education there will be self-boasting and self-expression. These are but a few of the various forms of “the flesh” to be discovered and taken to the Cross.

We are to acknowledge our crucifixion with Christ. This is where we must take our stand. Why vary between two opinions? Why be double-minded? Why make provision for the flesh? Why not pay your last respects to it at the grave? Be consistent. We are not debtors, thank God, to the flesh, to live after the flesh. When God says, “Pluck out,” don’t try to justify yourself. When He says, “Cut off,” don’t try to run from the truth.

We are largely creatures of habit. By birth we are selfish. And we have developed strong habits of living to please ourselves. Some of these traits have been practiced for a long time. You may have always murmured and complained. From the youngest childhood you may have tended to sulk and feel sorry for your “sad, sweet self.” But you need not do so. Those who deny themselves and follow Christ through the cross will find His overcoming life. Everything from the old Adam-life can be overcome through the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit. “For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5:17)

The flesh reasons that if your circumstances were only different you could have victory. But circumstances only expose what is wrong on the inside.

There are Christians who wonder why they can never gain a complete victory over their flesh-life. There is a lady, for example, who thinks she has certain freedoms to do what she desires. And she is not extravagant. But her life revolves around her likes and tastes and preferences. To these things she daily bows. This is where she finds her life. In effect, she is trying to find her life from the things of this world rather than from the Son’s life in the heavenly realms. These are the ones who will lose their life in the end. They may appear to be innocent, but their mind remains on earthly things.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the

flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 John 2:15-16)

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that *they are the enemies of the cross of Christ* {they reject His way of the cross}: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly...*who set their mind on earthly things*. For our citizenship {our place of life} is in heaven... (Phil. 3:18-20)

That is more than theology. It is a great fact. It is an unalterable law. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

The Savior said: “Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it.” Had she not left Sodom? Indeed she had. But her heart was still on the things of this world. She ended up a pillar of salt and a clear warning about living by the desires of the flesh.

My friend, the Lord is coming. What is your life? Is it lived in the Spirit? Oh that you would fully submit to the severing power of the Cross until you have completely overcome the world! We are debtors only to the Holy Spirit. Give the Cross full place in your life; abandon yourself to the Crucified One. The flesh does not have any power over His life.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh {after receiving the gift of the Spirit} you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom. 8:12-14)

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Gal. 6:14)

We cannot better close this chapter than by quoting Miss Amy Carmichael. She had died to herself in order to serve the Lord in India for many years. She bore in her body the marks of the Lord Jesus. “We who follow the Crucified are not here to make a pleasant thing of life; we are called to suffering for the sake of a suffering, sinful world. God forgive us our love of ease. God forgive us that so often we turn our faces from a life that is even remotely like His. Forgive us that we all but worship comfort, the delight of the presence of loved ones, possessions, treasures on earth.”

The softness of the flesh, the love of ease, the self-pity and self-saving that is now seen among so many members of the church has all but killed Christian testimony! Oh, the pain, the shame, the heartbreak of it all!

Today is the day to begin following Christ in His way of the cross. There is no other way to find His heavenly life. When others attempt to turn us back from this way of the cross we need to be prepared to say what Jesus said to Peter:

“Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me {into life in the heavenly realms}, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:23-25)

The Cross and Relationships

How revolutionary is the Cross?! It completely changes all our relationships—toward God, toward ourselves, toward others, toward everything. It changes our citizenship from this fallen world to the eternal kingdom of God. “For our citizenship {our place of life} is in heaven.” (Phil. 3:20) Once the Cross “takes possession of us...outside of it nothing seems to touch us; and those who do not understand it are strangers to us; ...those who love and serve it with us are our true, our only family.”

Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.” But He answered... “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” (Matt. 12:47-50)

Christ’s way of the Cross will separate the dearest of earthly ties. “Do you suppose,” warned the Savior, “that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division: For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.” (Luke 12:51-52) Our real brothers and sisters in life are those who live by the Spirit of God. The true family of God consists of those who are led by His Spirit.

Paul did consider the carnal Corinthians his children in the faith. But he needed to speak to them “contrary to nature.” Affectionate parents naturally want to be kind to their children. But Paul chose to stop being kind to their

flesh and warns them about their peril. “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh.” Speaking to them with the message of “Christ crucified,” he said, “If one died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves... (2 Cor. 5:14-15) *He could not know them “after the flesh” and save their souls from destruction.*

Few Christian parents are willing to lead their children in the way of the cross. They end up turning them away from the kingdom of God by pampering them according to the ways of this world. Even though they think they’re following the Lord, their wisdom breaks down when it comes to their children. Their fleshly sentiment ends up turning both themselves and their children into “enemies of the cross of Christ.” (Phil. 3:18)

If the cross begins to lay hold of either son or daughter, the mother, speaking from nature, cries out: Be it far from thee, this shall never be unto thee—Pity thyself, spare thyself, turn away from the Cross and save your life. Blessed is the young person who is able to sense the serpent’s subtle and feigned love in that dreadful hour and say with Jesus, “You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Matt. 16:23)

Jane Welsh, the daughter of John Knox, was once approached by the prison officials holding her husband, John Welsh. They wanted her to convince him to renounce his Protestant faith. Gathering up her apron she replied, “Please your majesties, I would rather catch his head there.” Our modern sentiment would call her intolerant, dogmatic and unloving. But she truly loved God first, and her husband as herself. She had suffered much for the faith through her husband’s imprisonment, but she still had him in her heart. She was more concerned about living with him in eternity than in this world.

There is nothing so life changing as the Cross. It also becomes the place of victory for ourselves and our relatives—“as dying, and, behold we live.”

The Cross and The Will of God

Christians often become deeply distressed in their efforts to resist providential suffering or sickness. Seeing it as a work of the devil, they insist it must be avoided. And when God does not answer their prayers they find their faith coming under attack. What these poor souls need to realize is that God is Sovereign over everything taking place in the lives of His children. Everything has its ultimate source in Him. We therefore need to say with Jesus, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

God uses His providences for our good. And He scourges every child He receives into resurrection life. It is designed to take away the independent and self-sufficient strength of the flesh and prepare us to live by His Spirit alone. Those who fully submit to this work will find His Kingdom-life of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17) We enter into this peaceable fruit of righteousness as we pass through the cross and become partakers of His holiness.

My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord...for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives {into His shared life within the heavenly realms}...for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:5-6, 10-11)

Miss Carmichael says, “There is no strength to resist the ravaging lion as he prowls about seeking whom he may devour, unless our own hearts have learned to accept the unexplained in our own lives.” We can never do better than to say with the Savior, “Thy will be done”—not in any sluggish, sleepy resignation as to the inevitable, but in a positive spirit of co-operation with the Lord, actively choosing what He wills “be done.”

The way of the cross is not easy. God must go on using his scourging work until the independent and self-sufficient spirit is destroyed. He needs to do away with the old self-originated Adam-life before the Kingdom-life of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” can be fully established within the heart.

Even if Job had known of the devil, we wonder how he could have triumphed over him better than he did. When his despairing wife cried, “Curse God and die,” Job replied, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” It was because he continued to trust in all the testings that God could finally double his life.

Many mistaught saints today would have said, “The Lord gave and Satan hath taken away, and I am going to fight with the devil.” But Job went through the very valley of strip-all, even to the smiting of his body with disease, and came out without the smell of smoke, yea, without the smell of self upon him. How could he have better foiled the devil than to resign himself completely to the good hand of God? Satan came again and again, but he could not find so much as a toe-hold in Job. The devil was foiled because Job continued to rest in God without turning away. It is these fully yielded lives that always gain the victory in the end.

“We conclude, therefore,” says Hudson Taylor, “that Job was not mistaken, and that we shall not be mistaken if we follow his example in accepting all God’s providential dealings as from Himself, and are sure that they will issue in ultimate blessing, because God is God, and therefore, ‘all things work together for good to them that love God.’ ”

How easily the great apostle Paul could have argued that it was the devil who had put him in prison. Surely Nero was of the devil. But Paul never hints that Nero is his jailor. It was under Nero that Paul wrote, “There is no power but of God.”

All of which reminds us of Samuel Rutherford, that unique and happy sufferer, who once said, “I go soon to my King’s palace in Aberdeen.” At Aberdeen he was imprisoned. And from that prison he wrote to a friend, “The Lord is with me, I care not what man can do. No person is provided for better than I am. My chains are even gilded with gold. No pen, no words; nothing can express the beauty of Christ.” What could the devil do, pray tell, with such a yielded soul? This utter submission to Christ as the “Lord of all,” (and therefore of every circumstance) is the surest way to overcome the enemy.

If we are to be *more than a conqueror in all such things*, where we do not become anxious or have a complaining spirit, it will be necessary to be utterly abandoned to God. This is the secret to victorious Christian living. Once we have passed through the dark night of the cross, this kind of yieldedness will keep the soul filled with the life of God.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thess. 5:16-18)

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding {the peace that comes from His indwelling Presence}, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless {pure in heart}, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life... (Phil. 2:14-16)

God always tests our consecration. It needs to be able to rest in God without complaining. Madame Guyon, the triumphant mystic of the Middle Ages, said: “No man can be wholly the Lord’s unless he is wholly consecrated to the Lord; and no man can know whether he is thus wholly consecrated except by tribulation. That is the test. To rejoice in God’s will,

when that will imparts nothing but happiness, is easy even for the natural man. But no one but the renovated man...can rejoice in the Divine will when it crosses his path... Beloved souls, there are consolations which pass away, but true and abiding consolations ye will not find except in entire abandonment, and in that love which loves the Cross. He who does not welcome the Cross does not welcome God.”

This last phrase, “He who does not welcome the Cross does not welcome God,” brings us face to face with the mystery of the sufferings of Christ. His whole life was one of total self-denial. He had no place to lay His head. Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. But no man took His life from Him.

Christ was a willing victim. He was willing to be spat upon, to be reviled, to be classed with criminals, to hang in humiliation before a jeering rabble upon the accursed tree. “Himself He cannot {and would not} save.” Forsaken by His friends and derided by His enemies, He continued to submit to providences that came from His Father.

The Last Adam had to completely reject and undo the ways of the willful first. He set a whole new course to follow. And then He said, “whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:27) It is eternally true, then, that “he who does not welcome the sufferings of the Cross does not welcome God.”

The Cross and Self-Will

Suffering is so unwelcome to the flesh that it demands the total surrender of our wills to submit to it. Here is where our consecration is measured. It also explains how Christ, although sinless and innocent, learned “obedience by the things which he suffered.” In order to be a perfect Redeemer from sin and self-will, Christ learned under the severest denial and testing to make the will of God supreme, and to keep it supreme, in the face of shame, in the face of suffering, in the face of death.

The real wretchedness and evil and ruin of man is the sin that turned man from God’s will to live by his own will. In effect, self-will is the essence and source of all sin. “The redemption of Christ has no reason, no object, and no possibility of success,” says Andrew Murray, “except in restoring man to do God’s will.” This is the essence of salvation: “He who does the will of God abides forever.”

Has the reader ever noticed how the Savior was always confronting man with the impossible? He gave commands that were utterly contrary to the flesh and human reason. How unreasonable and impossible to demand that human nature love its enemies, turn the other cheek, rejoice in suffering, in reproaches, in persecution, and on through the whole list of impossibles! He did it for a reason. He would need to bring individuals face to face with their selfish nature and their great need for a new source of life. The Savior was striking for the citadel of the will. Only when there was a loss of all hope in human strength would they be prepared to present themselves in a way that would permit Him to manifest His life and will through their mortal bodies.

Somebody has said, “It was the doctrine of Jesus, that if thy right hand offend thee, thou must cut it off; and if thy right eye offend thee, thou must pluck it out; *that is, if the most dear, the most useful and tender comforts thou enjoyest stand in thy soul’s way, and interrupt thy obedience to the voice of God and thy conformity to His holy will revealed in thy soul, thou are engaged {bound}, under the penalty of damnation, to part with them.*”

This quotation may sound harsh—“a hard saying”—but Christ did not speak smooth words. Since God can only become our Father through the birth of His own divine nature within us, the Lord continued to contradict “the natural” at every point. He would need to bring this flesh-life to a death. He wanted people to seek out the supernatural life that has its source in the Father which enables them to share with Him in His nature of holy love.

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven...* Therefore you shall be perfect {in holy love}, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5:44-45, 48)

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him... Love has been perfected among us in this: *that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.* (1 John 4:9, 17)

Just as His own Cross was the supreme expression of His own perfect obedience where He was tried to the utmost, so must Jesus bring His disciples through an awful process of inner crucifixion. He works to bring them to the end of their own strength and will so they are prepared to live through Him and walk by His Spirit in His will alone. Again, Christ did not come to straighten out the natural man but to do away with him using the Cross. Only then is it possible to live in the resurrection life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection... For the death that He died, He died to sin {self-will} once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:5, 10-11)

Christ's way of the cross has never changed. The Savior is still saying, "If any man will come after Me {into resurrection life}, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." We naturally insist that this is beyond our ability. Our real trouble, however, is in our unwillingness to die to our own will and ways. The Cross touches self and exposes the old willful nature. Here is the inbred sin that everyone receives from Adam. But we must go into our own Garden of Gethsemane and choose to take His way of the cross. Only then can He begin to work in the supernatural, which includes His scourging work, to bring about the end of the old flesh-life.

The Son overcame the body of flesh and can now share His own submissive nature with everyone who will choose to live through Him by faith. Those who find His life also find their pleasure in living for God's will. Heaven is a place of bliss because everything has its source in God. And those who enter into His Kingdom-life today can enjoy the same kind of submissiveness in His will here on earth as it is done in heaven. Thus, by submitting to the cross and waiting on the Lord to lift you with His resurrection power, you will soon be able to say with the apostle Paul, "I can do all things {fulfilling the will of God} through Christ who strengthens me."

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God {submit}, that He may exalt you in due time... But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Pet. 5:6, 10)

The purpose of the teachings of the Cross, as with all of Christ's commands, was to set self aside and bring the heart and will into harmony with God. *The whole of redemption is to save man from himself and the evil pride that leads to self-will and self-exaltation.* Huegel says, "Here lies the supreme glory of the Cross, and the reason why it is, as Paul says, 'the power of God and the wisdom of God.' It disposes us to die to 'self.' That is why it saves. It gets the consent of our wills that we may be detached from ourselves and attached to God. Any other kind of salvation would necessarily be fictitious."

Regardless of the conditions or difficulties you face in life, see in each one "a chance to die." For die to yourself you must if you intend to live through

the Son. Have your wishes been crossed? Have your likes and dislikes been disregarded, your wisdom discredited, and your sensibilities provoked? *Take any or all of these as a chance to die to your vainglory and pride.* You will learn little by little to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. *Self-will, self-justification and self-defense are indeed your greatest foes.* Your true place is “Crucified with Christ.” It is when you can honestly say, “I no longer live,” that you will also be in a position to experientially say, “Christ lives in me.”

The Cross and Fruitfulness

The church of the first century flourished while under persecution. It helps us to see how we become fruitful by taking up the sufferings of Christ. *Suffering leads to dependent faith. And it is in the weakness of dependent faith that Christ’s resurrection life and power is found.* But His life and power is lost in times of peace and plenty because it results in Christians living by their own strength. And without question we have become soft and self-indulgent. This reminds us of what the saintly Robert Murray McCheyne once said: “If Satan can only make a minister a lover of praises, of pleasure, of good-eating, he has ruined your ministry.”

In reminding the Galatians of the gospel he preached to them, Paul said, “I placarded Christ crucified before your eyes.” (Gal. 3:1, Lightfoot) In fact, Paul revealed Christ’s self-emptying life so clearly before their eyes that they considered him “ignorant.” Those who live in the strength of the natural man will consider it a feeble way to live.

Paul had the same problem with the Corinthians. Their course of life was away from the weakness of the cross. Although Paul had brought them to the Lord by preaching the way of “Christ crucified,” he later had to tell them they were going the wrong way. *Their self-seeking and self-exalting way of life was separating them from Christ’s life.*

You are already full {from feeding on the things of this world}! You are already rich {from hoarding your wealth}! You have reigned as kings {building up your reputations and your own little kingdoms in this world} without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign {in the true Kingdom-life of our Lord}, that we also might reign with you {sharing in the power of Christ’s throne}! For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last {since the last are always first in the spiritual life of heaven}, as men condemned to death {because the least and the weakest in the flesh become the most useful in God’s kingdom}; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but

we are dishonored!...Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the off scouring of all things until now... I have begotten you through the gospel {and the message of the cross}. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. (1 Cor 4:8-10, 12, 15-16)

For the message of the cross {the way of weakness in self and dependent faith in God} is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:18)

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak {in this way of the cross}, then I am strong {in the resurrection life of the Lord}. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

Imitate me {by taking this way of the Cross}, just as I also imitate Christ. (1 Cor. 11:1)

Oh to get men in touch with Christ! We must present Him by displaying His life; not merely preach Him. There is only one way in which you and I can draw souls to the true Christ. That is by walking in His way of the Cross, the way of sacrifice. "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." (John 12:24)

Certainly the great trouble with many of our orthodox churches is that they are like great grain containers, full of unplanted wheat which has become musty, and moldy, and befouled by the rats of self-will and self-exaltation. If only each little grain had been rent asunder from its fellows, cast into the dark, wet earth, buried out of sight, and left alone to endure disintegration and death, what a harvest we would see!

Various groups of Christian young people have been multiplying in recent years. This is a cause for much rejoicing. But therein lies a grave danger. The group spirit, the fleshly attachments, the emotional and the natural—all tend to prevent them from becoming God's isolated "corn of wheat." They never find life from above because they spend all their time trying to fill themselves up with life from this world.

Joseph, the overcomer, learned his lessons during thirteen long years of isolation, slavery, suspicion and slander. And every Christian, if he or she is to become truly fruitful, will be led along this same course. The persecuted church and the martyrs often found themselves isolated from the crowds. But

it was here, with their dependence upon God alone, that they found resurrection life and began to reveal it before the eyes of their persecutors. *The world then began to see how there is a life that can come down from God and provide victory in the most severe circumstances.*

We appeal to those who are sick of the shallows and the shams, sick of doing dead things, “sick unto death” of a fruitless, barren existence. Oh barren soul, hear the word of the Lord: “That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.” Is the reader trying to live the Christian life?—do the work of Christ?—bear His divine fruit? You cannot live until you have died. Death precedes life. “Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and die, it abideth alone.”

J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, once said: “We know how the Lord Jesus became fruitful—not by bearing His cross merely, but by dying on it. Do we know much fellowship with Him in this?... There is only one Christ. Are you willing to abide in Him, and thus to bear much fruit?” Death is still the gateway to life, life from the dead, life multiplied, life manifold. *We can never escape the law, unalterable and eternal, that “self”-sacrifice is the condition of all multiplication of life.*

Mrs. Penn-Lewis, whose writings have brought blessing to many, tells of a crisis in her life that came well after her deliverance from the dominion of sin. She says, “As I read the book, I clearly saw the way of the Cross, and all that it would mean. At first I flung the book away, and said, ‘No, I will not go that path. I shall lose my glory experience.’ But the next day I picked it up again, and the Lord whispered so gently, ‘If you want deep life, and unbroken communion with God, this is the way.’ I thought, ‘Shall I? No!’ And again I put the book away. The third day I again picked it up. Once more the Lord spoke, ‘If you want fruit, this is the path...’ And then, by His grace, I said, ‘I choose the path for fruitfulness...’ I walked for a time in such complete darkness—the darkness of faith—that it seemed almost as if God did not exist... From that hour I understood, and knew, intelligently, that it was dying, not doing, that produced spiritual fruit... The secret of a fruitful life is—in brief—to pour out to others and want nothing for yourself: to leave yourself utterly in the hands of God and not care what happens to you.”

The Cross and Attainment

Christians enter into a deeper relationship with Christ in His resurrection life by pressing into a deeper relationship with Him in His dying to the flesh and the world. Paul had long known an inward revelation of the life of Christ.

This presence of the resurrected Lord within Him is what qualified Him to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. He had said to the Galatians in his earliest epistle, “It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.” (Gal. 1:15-16) And yet, throughout his years as a minister of the gospel, he wanted to know more of “the power of His resurrection.” It was in the pursuit of this goal that we find him longing for a still deeper fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. He had learned the secret. The more he became “conformed to His death,” the more he was able to know the life and power of the Son’s resurrected life.

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. (Phil. 3:7-8, 10)

Among the things the apostle Paul counted “as loss” in order to become a more effective vessel of the life and power of God were his religious heritage, his religious education, his zeal for God, and even the righteousness he had developed by obeying God’s laws. Once he had died to the power of the flesh and had learned to put God’s power to work through dependent faith, the Spirit was able to work in him mightily. “To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me.” (Col. 1:29 NIV) *This divine power strengthened him when he did not have any confidence in the flesh.*

For we are the circumcision {those who have the flesh-life cut off}, who worship God in the Spirit {live by the Spirit}, rejoice in Christ Jesus {for what *He* is doing}, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phil. 3:3)

We fear that many Christians are attempting, through determination and imagination, to seat themselves in the heavenlies without following Christ in His way of the cross. Union with Him in His resurrection is proportional to union with Him in His death. His death represents the place of absolute weakness in self and dependence upon God. It was because He had chosen to sink down to the lowest place of nothingness, where there was nothing left in Himself, that the Spirit of God was able to raise Him to the highest place of usefulness. *And this is the “mind” that Christians must possess.* (Phil. 2:5-9)

After emptying Himself of His own glory, Christ was willing to become the poorest of servants. Have you been willing to follow Him by turning away from self-indulgence? Are you willing to become of no reputation and be

treated as a criminal without ever complaining? Only “the few” have ever been willing to truly follow Christ.

Our objective is to become an effective worker in the mission of furthering God’s kingdom. This kingdom consists of people who are walking by His Spirit rather than by the desires of the flesh. Our effectiveness in drawing others into His Spirit-directed and Spirit-empowered way of life will be in direct proportion to how far we have sunk down into our nothingness and permitted God to do the lifting. The higher He lifts us into His life, the easier it is for Him to draw others to Himself through the light.

The Cross and Satan

Concerning Satan, the Son said: “For the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.” (John 14:30) Fallen man, as he follows Satan, naturally lives in his own strength so he may do his own works and have his own glory. The devil had nothing in Jesus because he did not live in this self-originated form of life. It is when we live independent of God in any way that a harmony with hell is established.

It is significant that James says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (Jam. 4:7) Note here the divine order. Successful resistance to Satan becomes possible as we submit utterly to God. As long as self is living independently of God in some way, resistance to the devil is sheer folly. *We can only reign with Christ in His life when the Cross brings the old independent life to its death.*

It was at the Cross that Jesus gained a complete victory over the devil. But how? Was he not crucified through weakness?—led as a helpless lamb to the slaughter? Has the reader wondered how such a tragedy can be a triumph? Jesus said: “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” He refused the twelve legions of angels. But why turn Himself over to the devil and his dupes? Our human nature wants to see Him manifest His power. Human wisdom would expect to see Satan conquered through strength.

But God’s ways are not man’s ways. Victories in the spiritual realm cannot be weighed using the scales of gross matter. Paul says concerning the Cross: “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” (Col. 2:15) As we face this mystery of how He triumphed over Satan at the Cross, it becomes clear that sheer force does not have any part in the matter. Let us behold the Lamb as He goes to the Cross unresisting in utmost obedience to His Father. Here is the way of

victory and power. Let the devil do his worst. But the Last Adam will refuse to take matters into His own hands. He does not try to save Himself by turning to self-will. He gains His victory over Satan by doing nothing “out from” himself and entrusting Himself entirely into the hands of His Father. He chose the way of perfecting God’s power through the weakness of dependent faith. “And this is the victory that has overcome the world {and the flesh and the devil}—our faith.” (1 John 5:4)

As we stand crucified together with Christ, Satan is also bruised under our feet. *He is unable to find anything to lay hold on when we are dead to self-will and self-exaltation.* In that position we may reverently say with our Lord, “He has nothing in me.”

Are you tired of being beaten up by the devil? Does it seem like your spiritual life is continually being knocked down? It can mean only one thing; you have been attempting to hold yourself up in the strength of the flesh. The only part of you that the devil can touch is the flesh-life. And as long as it remains alive and active, you can expect the devil to hold considerable power over the state of your spiritual life.

Oh, the pity of it, the shame, the awful tragedy of it all! Emancipated, redeemed, and blood-bought, but still in bondage to the world, to the flesh, to and the devil. Soldiers of Christ, halt! About face! Claim your freedoms—crucified to “the world,” crucified to “the flesh,” crucified just where the serpent was crushed. You overcome by the Cross!

Let the devil do his worst. When we stand with Christ in His death, we also stand with Him at His throne. “To him who overcomes {by dependent faith} I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Rev. 3:21) “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col. 3:3)

The Cross and Kingship

Jesus said, “And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.” (Matt. 20:27) Being raised to the throne of power and kingship is conditioned upon sacrificial service. Christ’s true disciples serve him day and night around His throne. They listen to His word and carry out the works He has planned for them to do. “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.” (Rev. 7:15) In other words, the resurrected children of God live for Him and His glory alone.

The first Adam was created to have dominion. He was commissioned a king under the government of God. All of his prayers would be answered while he lived by the Spirit and prayed in the Spirit according to God's will. But man forfeited his regal power when he turned from a Spirit-directed way of life to a self-directed way of life. Those who live by the flesh separate themselves from the life and power of God. They cannot share with the Lord in His dominion over the world.

The thing that fallen man loves the most is to have his own way. Abdicate the throne? Never! He therefore remains in his fallen state because he lives for self.

The New Adam came as a new Head of a new race. He "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28) He came to die to the self-life. All the way "from the throne of highest glory to the Cross of deepest humiliation" He demonstrated a loving obedience to His Father. In a perfectly selfless manhood, and by an infinite descent into the depths of a voluntary death, *He brought an end to the pride that led to self-will and self-exaltation*. He came to do His Father's will. He did not permit the self-life to gain a foothold in Him. He died to it once for all. The "self-life," whether in men, or in demons, or in the devil, is now and forever condemned.

On the basis of that Cross, God now deals with man. *God is left without recourse when individuals continue to stand at the foot of the Cross without making an ash-heap of the pride that leads to self-will and self-exaltation; all hope is dead*. "For whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:27, 33)

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who...made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death... Therefore God also has highly exalted Him... (Phil. 2:5-9)

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. (1 Pet. 5:5-6)

The only way to be lifted into a position of sharing with Christ in the power of His throne is by following Him into the depths of His humiliation at the Cross. We can only share with Him in His exalted life when we are nothing in ourselves.

What earthly power can dethrone self and unseat a man from the throne of every earthly ambition? The Cross alone has the power to work out this glorious salvation!

Those who have truly come to understand the mystery of the Cross, and how it perfects God's power through weakness and dependent faith, have learned the secret to always walking in victory. The design of the Cross is to make us "more than conquerors" in all things. Calvary re-creates kings—kings in Christ—kings who reign in life amidst all conditions.

The Cross and The Crown

Christ directly connected His glorification with His sufferings. There is no crown without the cross. Golgotha and glory are forever wedded in the Savior's life. Those who are willing to follow Him by sinking down into Calvary's depths are assured of the heights of glory. The rewards are sure. "But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:13)

Crowns are for those who have followed Christ through the cross. This law is so inflexible that the call to the cross is truly a call to the crown. "And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Rom 8:17)

We should not be surprised when this message of the cross causes dismay and alarm to those who want to live in the strength of the flesh. Anyone who teaches this message of the cross, which speaks of dying to self-will, can expect to be treated poorly by the people who love this world. Because those in darkness will hate this light of truth, they will naturally seek to do away with those who bear the light. Is there any wonder why they crucified Christ? And should we not expect the same when we spread His truth?

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. (Matt. 10:25-26)

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3:12)

The cross captured men and carried them carefree and happily, yea, even recklessly through the midst of the most excruciating agonies and tortures and

deaths. These saints became such free citizens of heaven that they had no interest in the customs of this fallen world. Their way of life literally turned the ways of this world upside down.

The true followers of Christ wore the insignia of humiliation, treated the trifles of time with contempt, and lived in the eternal life. Having faith in God, they walked in the way of the cross as their means for finding life from above. They were lifted spiritually by the power of God in direct proportion to how far they sank down into its depths.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:1-3)

Christ embodied all He taught. *From the heights of glory He descended from the Godhead to manhood. As a man He descended to a servant. From life He descended to death. From a common death He descended to that of a criminal. And having plumbed the depths, he is highly exalted. His exaltation by the power of the Spirit is measured by His humiliation. His ascent is but His "descent reversed."* And ours comes in the same way. "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

Have you truly become a follower of Christ? There is no other way to find His life. If you are attempting to find a way into the heavenly realms other than through the cross, you are deceiving yourself. Listen to Jesus: "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized." (Mark 10:39)

We must descend to the dust in utmost humiliation if we want to be lifted into the Presence of God. But that "must" is never by coercion. Each individual must consciously choose to follow Christ. There is no other way to find the crown. The devil has truly beclouded these mysteries and deceived many into thinking that his self-seeking and self-exalting ways will actual lead them into life. But he has been a liar from the beginning.

God's selfless "Corn of Wheat" fell into the ground and died. But let us now note how the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit reversed His descent. From those unplumbed depths of death, He rises to the place of highest usefulness. "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him" to the place of greatest power and authority. And it was not because of His eternal glories. This great power in the eternal world was given to Him solely because He humbled Himself as a man.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him...in the heavenly realms. (Eph. 1:18-20 NIV)

“He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” (1 Cor. 6:17) Listen fellow believer. The promises of the Lord are sure. “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Rev. 3:21) It was only by overcoming the self-seeking and self-exalting ways of this world that He gained this eternal position. The only way up is down.

Joseph was such an overcomer. Joseph had to go down to the lowest place before He could be lifted by the power of God to the throne. His descent was climaxed with false accusations and imprisonment. At every point he suffered for no fault of his own but solely “for righteousness sake.” He endured thirteen long years of insult and injury, suspicion and slander, testing and trial and treachery. But all these things, terrible as they were, were actually God’s instruments to prepare him to be lifted to the throne of power. He said, “For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” (Gen. 41:52)

As we study Joseph sharing in the power of the throne, fully forgiving and feeding and caring for the very brethren who had sold him out, we can gain a better understanding of the kind of selflessness that God must put within our heart before He can manifest His power through our lives. Crowns of righteousness will be conferred upon those who have fully yielded to the mind that was in Christ.

He has promised to exalt you in due time. *Every downward step, every dying to self, every embracing of the cross—whether in the form of denial or degradation, of suffering or separation, of false accusation or humiliation—all these and a hundred other things that might be mentioned, are not a descent into misery but actually an ascent to life and power on the throne. Our call to embrace the Cross is a call to reign with Christ.*

Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him {and His way of the cross}, He also will deny us. (2 Tim. 2:10-12)

The Cross and Methods

Paul referred to “speaking the truth in love.” Here is the divine order. Our first duty is not to speak lovely things or even to speak in love, but to speak the truth. How? “In love.” If we love our God, we shall then speak the truth to others; and in keeping with the second commandment, we shall speak to them “in love.” Let us not offend our God by holding back the truth because of some supposed love for our neighbor’s feelings.

It was this glorious compound of a terrible, yet tearful tenderness, that caused the early church to go forth as an army of “invaders from another world,” bent on taking human hearts captive for their crucified Master. They knew the meaning of Christ’s promise: “I will come to you... Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” (John 14:18-20) And so they revealed the Son’s light of life, by sharing with Him in the love He shares with the Father.

And the glory which You {the Father} gave Me {the Son} I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one {sharing in the same life}: I in them, and You in Me...that the love with which You love Me {perfect love} may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:22-23, 26)

Concerning these invaders who became vessels of God’s life and glory, let us repeat what A. J. Gordon said: “*The help of the world, the patronage of its rulers, the loan of its resources, the use of its methods* (well this sure don’t describe today’s church!) – *they utterly refused* – lest by employing these, they might compromise their King. An invading army maintained from an invisible base, and placing more confidence in the leadership of an unseen Commander than in all imperial help that might be proffered—that was what so bewildered and angered the heathen, who often desired to make friends with the Christians without abandoning their own gods.”

Before we can thus present Christ, there will need to be many heart searchings and humblings before God. There must be an uncomplaining, uncompromising, embracing of the Cross—an utter and courageous rejection of the idol “self.” Ourselves we cannot save if Christ is to manifest His life and glory through our mortal bodies.

Let us warn our reader in advance. If you plan to follow Christ into this heavenly life, you can expect to pass through agonies that will amount to a thousand deaths in order to unlearn and separate your heart and mind from the self-seeking and self-exalting ways of this world. It will entail dying to the wisdom of this world. Most of you simply do not realize how much you are relying on your committees and your human programs. This is what has

separated the church from the life and power that was manifested through the early disciples.

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit {live through the Spirit}, rejoice in Christ Jesus {for what He is doing}, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phil. 3:3)

There will be others who have gotten into such habits of trying to be someone special, that following Christ will be like uprooting everything you have become. But if you want to be chosen by God, you will need to choose to live by His wisdom. Do not be so foolish as to think you can take the wisdom of this world into the heavenly realms.

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things which are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

Like Saul, many of you have been trying to save your kingdom. You have saved your life in this world, but your spiritual life is always dying. The energy of the flesh not only spoils God's work; it separates you from the kingdom of God and an ever-flowing supply of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." *The rivers of living water cannot flow through a soul that is still attempting to exalt "self" through its own works.*

Your trouble may be that you have been devoted to a cause. You have been ambitious to build your work. Shamefully, you have made use of Jesus to exalt self. But as you contemplate cutting away these fleshly contrivances and false ambitions, you become almost paralyzed with fear. Oh the shame you may have to suffer in order to sink down into the depths of the Cross. We know it is going to be hard. But cheer up. Once you have been undone in the fires of God's furnace, you will come forth without the smell of that old self-life that has been permeating everything you do. !!!!!

But if you persist in following the ways of the world let us give you the advice of Prof. Upham, a minister and theologian of a century ago: "They are slow to learn what is to be done, and equally reluctant to submit to its being done. God desires and intends that they shall be His; but, the hour of their inward redemption not being fully come, they still love the world. They attach their affections first to one object, and then to another. They would, perhaps, be pleased to have God for their portion; but they must have something

besides God. In other words, they vainly imagine that they would like to have God and their idols at the same time. And there they remain for a time, fixed, obstinate, inflexible. But God loves them. *Therefore, as they will not learn by kindness, they must learn by terror.* The sword of Providence and the Spirit is applied successively to every tie that binds them to the world. Their property, their health, their friends, all fall before it. The old fabric of hope and joy, where self-love was nourished and pride had its nest, is leveled to the dust. They are smitten within and without; burned with fire; overwhelmed with the waters; peeled, and scathed, and blasted, to the very extremity of endurance; till they learn, in this dreadful baptism, the inconsistency of the attempted worship and love of God and Mammon at the same time, and are led to see that God is and ought to be the true and only Sovereign.”

It is thus that God chooses in this dreadful furnace of affliction those who He will exalt. Such spiritual leaders can never be made by man or any combination of men. Neither councils, nor conferences, nor synods, nor schools can make them, but only God. This process, of course, applies equally to the man in the pew. Every Christian is to be a vessel of the life, will, and works of God. Each member of the body must die to self before Christ can live through them.

To simple, earnest, heart-hungry souls we make our appeal. Seek spiritual liberty as soldiers of the Cross of Christ. Believe with all your heart that Christ will manifest His life and power within you. Sit down and count the cost. Be well assured that God will take you through some scourging in this way of the Cross. There will need to be a mighty inward liberation through an inner crucifixion, which will also provide a real freedom and carefreeness in the Spirit. And we are not referring to lightness. There is too much of that to show forth the glory of God. “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the {inward} revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 1:13) He will lift you into His heavenly spiritual life in due time.

In a generation that glories in the flesh and well nigh worships organizational power, God’s choice of weapons seems to be “foolishness” personified. But “the foolishness of God is wiser than men.” And while the message of the Cross is foolishness to the wise and learned of this world, it is the power of God to those who are truly being saved.

Have you chosen to reject the spirit of this world so you may follow the Son of God? We must not forget that His ways are diametrically opposed to the ways that are highly valued by the people of this world. You are in serious trouble if you are still valuing things that are highly esteemed by worldly minded people. “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God

knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:15)

“Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” Let us then be careful that we despise not our poverty, our insignificance and our weakness. So far from being handicaps, these things are in the direct line of God’s choice. Let us, then, seize hold of the opportunity by “yielding our nothingness to God” so that He may manifest His life and glory through the vessel.

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God. (2 Cor 3:5)

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us...always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. (2 Cor. 4:7, 10)

In closing, we appeal to everyone who truly desires to serve the Lord in the “power of an endless life.” (Heb. 7:16) For the sake of the eternal kingdom of God, sink down into the weakness of the Cross so that Christ may take possession of you with His everlasting life. You do not need to be highly gifted to function in the power of the Spirit. The Lord is waiting to take the nonentities, the nothings, and the nobodies, and make them, even in this unbelieving age, into a mighty force of spiritual warriors. All He asks is that you learn to live by His Spirit in dependent and trusting faith.

Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as {trusting and dependent} little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 18:3)

I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. (Matt. 11:25)

Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:2-3)

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might... For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph. 6:10-12)