

acceptable to God through Him. He loved men until they began to love Him and wanted to let God have full sway in their lives.

He provided a source of spiritual life and overcoming power for men by giving the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in the lives and hearts of men, to bear the fruit of a changed heart and a right spirit before God (John 7:38, 39; 14:23; 3:5; Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:1-11; Gal. 5:16-25). When men accept His death as their own and cease to live unto themselves the old life of self-will, He makes them new creatures by the life of His Spirit within them, living unto Him a life that is reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:14-19).

In His resurrection and other miracles He laid the foundations of faith; He called and prepared the apostles as witnesses to the truth; so that we might have an honest conviction of truth concerning Him to support a lifelong trust able to withstand the winds and currents of thought and emotion. He gave us abundant evidence for making an intelligent, firm and wholehearted commitment unto Him.

Jesus' work of reconciliation was not altogether completed during His life on earth. Much of it was accomplished through His death and resurrection, and even after His ascension into Heaven. But all reconciliation of men with God is accomplished through Jesus Christ — through the finished work of His incarnation, through the effect of His message on those who hear, believe, and obey it.

He has given to us a glorious part in this continuing ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18-21). We should rejoice in it as Paul did. Let us be faithful and fervent in entreating men on behalf of Christ, beseeching them, "Be ye reconciled unto God."

For Further Study:

See books listed on pages 488 and 489.

NEW LIFE THROUGH ACCEPTING JESUS' DEATH

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

We need to meditate on the meaning of the cross. Brief periods of meditation during the serving of the Lord's Supper on Sundays are helpful. But also we need to give many an hour to serious meditation on what the cross means in our lives.

Jesus Was Crucified For Us

The idea of sacrifice was not a human invention born of the superstitions and fears of men. God originated sacrifice! All the sacrifices made from the time of Cain and Abel and Adam and Eve until Jesus' death were promissory notes which were paid in full by Jesus' death on the cross. Why were all these sacrifices made? God required them as acts of obedient faith on the part of those who were seeking to please Him (Heb. 10:1-10).

In the Old Testament times God did not attempt to redeem man with the blood of bulls and goats. God did not try one thing and find that it failed. He planned from the beginning to give His Son. The other sacrifices were just the proclamation of the coming sacrifice of His Son. I think the Lord's Supper today does for us exactly what the animal sacrifices did for David, Moses, and Abraham. They both proclaim our sinfulness and need of a sacrifice and proclaim God's provision of a way of redemption. Only the Lord's Supper looks back upon the accomplished redemption by Jesus Christ; the animal sacrifices looked forward unto the sacrifice that would be acceptable unto God. Hebrews 10:6, 7 says that in sacrifices and burnt offerings God had no pleasure, and they were not acceptable unto Him; but He prepared a body for His Son that He might do His will. Jesus came to do God's will; but the old sacrifices did not accomplish God's will. God proclaimed the need of a sacrifice from the beginning. There has never been any way for any man's sin to be forgiven, except through redemptive sacrifice.

How could God be righteous and let Abraham get by with lying like he did? How could God be righteous and let Jacob get by with cheating like he did? (He charged an exorbitant price for a bowl

of bean soup?) How could God be righteous and let David get by with murder like he did? One English philosopher-poet said, "Mercy but murders, pardoning them that kill." Think that through. The judge of all the earth knows right and He must do right. God cannot sit on the bench, so to speak, and have sinners like me brought before Him and say, "He is no sinner." If a judge pronounces the guilty guiltless, then the judge is guilty. God cannot do that! God knows! God is true! God cannot simply say a sinner has not sinned. He cannot ignore sin. It is absolutely morally impossible for God simply to forget about and overlook the sins of men. *How can He be righteous then and forgive sinners?*

God does not condone sin. He does not break His own word. "The soul that sinneth shall surely die" (Ezek. 18:20). He carries it out to the letter. But He provides out of His own heart's generosity, out of His own love and holiness, the means by which we may identify ourselves with the death of Christ, and may receive the gift of life in Christ—a life that is not our own but is dead to self. We come forth from baptism as newborn babes—born in the righteousness of God. Isn't it a tremendous truth which you read in the scriptures, "Him who knew no sin, God made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21). See I Peter 2:24-25; Matthew 20:28; Titus 2:11-14; Romans 3:23-31. In anguish, in punishment, in torment on the cross, Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). I think He knew why; but He could not help the cry. Never had Jesus been out of harmony with His Father, out of joyful satisfaction of the Father's good pleasure, and complete devotion to the Father's will. Here in obedience to Him now He suffers as the guilty, suffers for all the guilt of the world. Even the feeling of God's great displeasure and wrath against sin was upon Him. It was almost more than He could bear. Perhaps this actually broke His heart physically. It is more than we can realize that He was willing to die in our place that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, that we might return unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, that we might let Christ put within us a new life, so that God could be just, in the passing over of the sin done aforetime (Rom. 3:25).

All the sins God had not punished yet from the Old Testament times, all the sins He seemed to wink at and to pass over and forgive, the sins of all those who had not been sent to hell made God appear guilty for condoning them, until Jesus' sacrifice fulfilled the purpose of God. At the same time Jesus' death justified them before

God by faith, and fulfilled the sacrifices by which God had foreshadowed the death of Jesus to them. By obeying in faith the sacrifices, they identified themselves with the death of Jesus. But they did not enter the kingdom the way we do. Though, like John the Baptist, they may be the best ever born of women, they are not up to the standard of the least that are born of the Spirit. We have the special privilege of knowing His death, and receiving the gift of His life.

We Are Crucified with Christ

Why could Jesus die in our place? Why could nothing else be a suitable sacrifice for our sins? Some persons reject the idea that someone could suffer the penalty for another's sins and any kind of justice be made out of it at all. It seems so true that my sin is my sin and nobody else is accountable for it or can bear the punishment of it. How can another take away my guilt from me? How can Jesus' death mean anything to my guilt?

God declares that Christ died for my sins. I must accept His death as the evidence of God's love. I must accept His death as God's provision for my own death as the sentence I deserve and turn my own life over to Jesus. If Jesus gives me His death and I give Him my life, then it is a fair exchange. If I accept His death as mine so that my death is past, then He died my death, and it is no more my life that lives, but Christ lives in me. I am united with Him so that God sees Him in me, because He now lives in me, and sees me in Him. Then you can see how God is just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus.

I think that forgiveness of sins by God required something more than the arbitrary or technical transference of guilt from one being to another. This is something that it seems cannot be done in justice. There is no justice in it! But God does not do it that way. Read carefully Romans 3:21-31. Note first that salvation is to those who believe. This is one place where people misunderstand the gospel. They assume that people can be saved in unbelief. The gospel cannot be understood if it is applied to anybody but believers. Christianity cannot be consistently held if even its standards of morality are applied to anyone but believers. You cannot make a community Christian without making individuals believers. That is true from households to nations. International relations can never be on a Christian basis until the individuals who control those nations and conduct those nations are believers in Jesus Christ above all else.

Paul says, "whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25, 26). We do not put faith in the blood, but salvation must be by the means of the blood, through faith.

God himself could not be just, if He merely called a sinner guiltless. He cannot just forget about a man's sin. But by Jesus fulfilling the law of God and by the man being identified with Jesus before God, so that the Spirit of Christ lives in the man, and the death of Christ is accepted by that man on his own part, in a covenant of life and of death, God can justly forgive and forget.

Why is faith required? Why didn't God just make a sacrifice somewhere in the universe and then tell us the sacrifice is made? I had some vague idea like this in the first ten years I remember going to church—that Jesus died for sins; therefore sins don't matter anymore. A lot of people seem to think that Jesus took care of my sins without affecting me in any way. Jesus doesn't take care of your sins unless you die to sin. The sentence of death still applies to you and to me, not simply to Him. It is His death which we accept as our death. Romans 6:1-11 preaches "the doctrine of the cross" in your life:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once; but the life he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

It is not only that Jesus had to be crucified for our salvation; we must be crucified for our salvation by being crucified with Him. We must accept His death as our own death, so that the body of sin is done away and we are no longer under the dominion of sin. So we count ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God for evermore.

The purpose of Jesus' death was to make salvation available for the whole world (1 John 2:3). He "is the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10). Yet His death does not accomplish the redemption of the whole world, only of repentant believers who are baptized into Him. That is why baptism is so important. That is why faith in Him is so important. That is why we must preach the gospel. That is what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ which may be "filled up on our part, for the sake of His body the church." In Colossians 1:24 Paul says, "How I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church."

How could Paul be so bold as to imply that Jesus didn't suffer enough on the cross? Jesus did suffer enough to accomplish the atonement for our redemption; but Jesus' suffering did not carry that redemption to every man. It takes the continuing body of Jesus, the church, to do it. It takes messengers of the cross like Paul, to fill up on their part what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ to reach all men. The message of the cross of Christ is God's plan of redemption for man. But the hearer must make the response of faith so he can receive its benefits.

The sacrifice of Jesus is not effective just because he died. Rather it is effective when you accept it as your death, when you are buried into His death, and when you rise to walk in the newness of life with Christ's Spirit dwelling in you. The scripture plainly says that if the Spirit of Christ does not dwell in you, then you are none of His (Rom. 8:9, 10). It is because of this union with Christ that His death is justly seen as your death, and your life is justly seen as His life, and your life is His liability which He has fully paid on the cross.

We must accept the sentence of death in ourselves. I think God exemplified this in the Old Testament in dealing with the people of Israel, when He gave them a law and a covenant, and told them they would perish if they didn't keep them. They didn't keep His law, and He said the nation of Judah must perish. Then when he had destroyed it, as soon as the sentence was carried out, He could begin to keep His word to bring it to life by grace for the sake of the promises

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He had made. Note how Jeremiah bought a field before the nation was destroyed to show his confidence that God would raise up the nation after the sentence had been carried out (Jer. 32).

We are not in the new covenant if we have to be controlled by laws. If you have to be compelled to give 10% because it is the law of God, you aren't in the new covenant. If you have to be compelled to attend church because it is the law of God, then you are not in the new covenant. The only people that are in Christ are those who believe Him, who love Him, and who work, not by the laws of the old covenant, but in the freedom that is in Christ. They do not use their freedom as an occasion to the flesh, but by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the flesh, and live by faith working through love. Study Galatians 5 on this subject. The flesh cannot be reborn; the flesh must die! That's the point! By flesh we do not mean that the body in and of itself is evil, but we mean the self-will and fleshly mind that does things because I like it, because I want to, because I am the master of my life, because I sit on the throne, because I don't care about God. This must die! This whole attitude must die! The church has a hard time being the church when it is filled with carnal people who have the fleshly mind, who have their will and their way that must be satisfied, and who simply compromise with one another instead of surrendering unto God, unto a newness of life (Rom. 8:5-13; 6:1-11, 17, 18, 20-23).

New Life In Christ

II Corinthians 5:14-17 says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died. [If He died our death, our death is past.] He died for all that they should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again. Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh [i.e., from the merely human point of view, because we don't live to exercise our own minds and to have our own feelings and to think our own thoughts and to make our own judgments]. We simply don't have a life of our own anymore. It has been bought with a price, it has been taken over by Jesus, it has entered into His death. Even if we have known Christ (as Paul once mistakenly knew Him) from the human point of view, yet now we know Him so no more. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" [all things are become new]."

Paul describes his new life in Christ: "For I through the law died

unto the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:19, 20). That's the life we live: the life Christ gives to those who open their hearts to Him because they trust Him. They believe in God's judgment and in His grace. They accept the sentence of death upon self for sin; and they accept the gift of new life, which is Christ's life in us in place of our own.

The greatest mistake the Christian can make is to say "It's my life, and I'll live it," because that must reject our salvation. The *only* salvation there is for any sinner, is to give my life up to Jesus and to receive His death for mine. And any time anybody thinks "It's my life, and I'll live it," he has forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. He has forgotten his Savior, he has renounced his Master, and he has immediately taken all his sins upon himself afresh.

We are not saved simply by Jesus' death, but by our union with Jesus' death, by our entering into Jesus' death, by the applying of His death to us, by the reality of the fact that it is "no longer we that live but Christ that lives in us." This does not mean that our salvation depends upon our keeping a tense obligation to law constantly to keep ourselves saved. That is not the idea at all. It just means that with a complete confidence in Jesus, you simply quit running your own life and let Jesus open it up under new management.

The life that we have lived in our own bodies, we lived into an impossible state of debt and bankruptcy and guilt and degradation. But Jesus took the life that we had ruined, He closed out the old account, paying it off, and opened up our lives anew under new management. He lets us work here, and live here, and enjoy the better conditions. But He is the owner and the proprietor of your ears and your hair and your clothes and your car and your nose and your handwriting and everything. He is the proprietor. It is this union with Jesus that makes redemption effective.

I cease to live my sinful life, and I enter into covenant with God into a covenant relationship with Christ. The two lives are blended together and His Spirit fills me, and the guilt is upon Him, and I'm free. My sins are gone! Praise God, my sins are gone, deeper than the deepest sea, never to be remembered anymore because in Christ I've ceased to be. A man does not stand anymore before God in judgment by himself. He will be judged before the judgment bar of Christ according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good

or evil (II Cor. 5:10). His deeds prove the reality of his faith. But we stand in Christ.

The biggest difference between men is whether they are in Christ or not in Christ, not whether they are rich or poor, white or black, modern or ancient, in East or West, educated or uneducated, but *in Christ or not in Christ!* "In Christ there is now no condemnation," Paul says in Romans 8:1 and expands it into a whole glorious chapter of assurance. Those outside of Christ are "without God and without hope in the world" (Eph. 2:12; see Eph. 4:17-19).

That is why our union with Christ is more permanent than marriage, and more significant. When we are joined to Christ, it is the most significant thing that ever happens to us. The sinners who have faith in Jesus can be justified by Him through their faith (Rom. 4 and James 2:14-26). We become a part of Him who becomes righteousness in us, and the requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Not that God's law becomes ineffective; it is removed as a law, the ministration of death and condemnation; but the law is really established. "Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus 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, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:1-3). What God could not do in the law, in that it was weak depending upon the flesh, He did through the gospel. In Jesus Christ He sent His Son and condemned sin in the flesh, that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. For the flesh is not subject to the law of God; it is at enmity with God; but ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ (God) dwelleth in you (see Rom. 8:4-11).

Regeneration is essential to the Christian life. We have sometimes concentrated upon baptism to the point of neglect of the regeneration of a man. We do not realize that one cannot just join a church and be saved. We must be born anew to be saved. To emphasize the significance of this, some people have tried to make it an overwhelming emotional experience, which they seek at some point to represent as a miracle from God; and then they minimize obedience to the gospel. On the other hand, we emphasize obedience in baptism and minimize the faith and repentance, the surrender of self, the taking

up of a new relationship with Christ and the world, through the crucifixion of self. Then from these two extremes we both neglect the combination and reality in which they should unite. Trust and surrender to Christ in our hearts must be united with obedience to His word if we actually have the new life made available through His death.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

—Isaac Watts

For Further Study:

- Barclay, William. *The Mind of St. Paul*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1958. Pp. 97-108. Explains Paul's teaching about the meaning of the death of Christ. Barclay adopts some liberal positions in some of his writings.
- Byers, Melvert. "We Enter By Death." *Christian Standard* 91 (Oct. 13, 1956). Pp. 647. Stresses the need to crucify our self-centeredness.
- Cottrell, Jack. *Being Good Enough Is Not Good Enough*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1976. Discusses salvation, redemption, justification and reconciliation in non-technical language. Shows the interpretation of Christ's death for us made by the apostle Paul in Romans and Galatians.
- Chamberlain, William Douglas. *The Meaning of Repentance*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1943. Shows that repentance is not remorse but it is a complete renovation of one's mind from the mind of flesh to the mind of the Spirit.
- Morris, Leon. *The Cross in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965. Pp. 180-269. Extensive development of Paul's teaching on the cross.