

THE CROSS (12)

Studying these truths is hard work, is it not? Although spiritual hunger and need are prime requisites for light and understanding, the Holy Spirit does not release the treasures of the Word quickly nor easily. "Deep calleth unto deep." We have to be prepared, and even then there is much time and digging and praying and meditation and yearning and experiencing involved. True spiritual reality comes in no other way, but, praise the Lord, it does come in this way!

Understanding and appropriating the facts of the cross proves to be one of the most difficult and trying of all phases for the growing believer. Our Lord holds His most vital and best things in store for those who mean business, for those who hunger and thirst for His very best as it is in our Lord Jesus Christ. The believer's understanding of the two aspects of Calvary gives the key to both spiritual growth, and life-giving service.

"Calvary is the secret of it all. It is what He did there that counts, and what He did becomes a forte in the life of a Christian when it is appropriated by faith. This is the starting point from which all Godly living must take its rise. We shall never know the experience of Christ's victory in our lives until we are prepared to count (reckon) upon His victory at the cross as the secret of our personal victory today. There is no victory for us which was not first His. What we are to experience He purchased, and what He purchased for us we ought to experience. The beginning of the life of holiness is a faith in the crucified Savior which sees more than His substitutionary work. It is a faith which sees myself identified with Christ in His death and resurrection."

Actually, our Father has trained every one of us for clear-cut, explicit faith in this second aspect of Calvary: our individual identification with the Lord Jesus in His death unto sin and rising onto resurrection ground. This training taught us thoroughly in the first realm: believing and appropriating the finished work of His dying for our sins -- justification. Now we are asked just as definitely to believe and appropriate the further aspect: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him" (Romans 6:11).

Our intelligent faith standing upon the facts of Calvary gives the Holy Spirit freedom to bring that finished work into our daily lives. We stood upon the fact of His dying FOR our sins, and this act of faith allowed the Holy Spirit to give us our freedom from the penalty of sin -- justification. Now, once we come to see the fact of the further aspect, we are urged in the Word to stand upon the liberating truth of our dying with Christ in His death unto sin, which allows the Holy Spirit to bring into our lives freedom from the power, the enslavement, of sin -- progressive sanctification. And of course when we stand with Him in Glory, we will be forever free from the presence of sin -- entirely sanctified and glorified.

"As our Substitute He went to the cross alone, without us, to pay the penalty of our sins; as our Representative, He took us with Him to the cross, and there, in the sight of God, we all died together with Christ. We may be forgiven because He died in our stead; we may be delivered because we died with Him. God's way of deliverance for us, a race of hopeless incurables, is to put us away in the cross of His Son, and then to make a new beginning by re-creating us in union with Him, the Risen, Living One (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is the Holy Spirit who will make these great facts real and true in our experience as we cooperate with Him; and so the plague of our hearts will be stayed, and we shall be transformed into the likeness of Christ."

"Through the crucifixion of the old man with Christ the believer has been made dead unto sin, he has been completely freed from sin's power, he has been taken beyond sin's grip, the claim of sin upon him has been nullified. This is the flawless provision of God's grace but this accomplished fact can only become an actual reality in the believer's experience as faith lays hold upon it and enables him moment by moment, day by day, though temptation assail him, 'to reckon' it true. As he reckons, the Holy Spirit makes real; as he continues to reckon, the Holy Spirit continues to make real. Sin need have no more power over the believer than he grants it through unbelief. If he is alive unto sin it will be due largely to the fact that he has failed to reckon himself dead unto sin." --R. Paxson

The Reformation brought into focus once again the emphasis upon spiritual birth, without which there can be no beginning. What is lacking amongst believers to this day is the proper emphasis upon GROWTH -- not just to be saved, and heaven bye and bye. What sort of salvation would we have if our Father simply saved us from the penalty of our sins, and then left us on our own to deal with the power of sin in our Christian life and walk? But most believers feel this is about as far as He went, and are struggling to get on the best they can, with His help. And this is the Galatian error, so prominent even now throughout born-again circles. We must be brought back to the two basics: freed from the penalty of sin by His finished work; freed from the power of sin by His finished work. "...Justified by faith..." (Galatians 3:24); "...we walk by faith..." (2 Corinthians 5:7); "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Colossians 2:6).

We are not left to deal with the old life ourselves; it has been dealt with by Christ on the cross. This is the fact which must be known, and upon that fact is built the New Testament principle and doctrine of holiness. In other words, Calvary is as much the foundation of sanctification as of justification. Both gifts spring from the same work and are two aspects of the same salvation."

Now, as long as the believer does not know this dual aspect of his salvation, the best he can do is seek to handle his sins via confession (1 John 1:9) -- that is, after the damage has been done! This takes care of the penalty of the product, but not the source. Is it not time we allowed the Holy Spirit to get at the source, and cut off this stream of sins before they are

committed? Is this not infinitely better than the wreckage caused by sin, even though confessed? When believers get sick and tired of spinning year after year in a spiritual squirrel cage -- sinning, confessing, but then sinning again -- they will be ready for God's answer to the source of sin, which is death to self, brought forth from the completed work of the cross.

"When God's light first shines into our heart our one cry is for forgiveness, for we realize that we have committed sins before Him; but once we have known forgiveness of sins, we make a new discovery -- the discovery of sin, and we realize that we have the nature of a sinner. There is an inward inclination to sin. There is a power within that draws us to sin, and when that power breaks out we commit sins. We may seek and receive forgiveness, but then we sin again; and life goes on in a vicious circle -- sinning and being forgiven, but then sinning again. We appreciate God's forgiveness, but we want something more than that, we want deliverance. We need forgiveness for what we have done, but we need deliverance from what we are."

Our reckoning upon the finished work of our death unto sin, in Christ at Calvary, is God's ONE way of deliverance -- there is no other way because that is the way He did it. We learned not to add to a finished work in the matter of justification, and now we must learn not to add to the finished work of emancipation. We will be freed when we enter His prepared freedom -- there is no other. "The believer can never overcome the old man even by the power of the new apart from the death of Christ, and therefore the death of Christ unto sin is indispensable, and unless the cross is made the basis upon which he overcomes the old man, he only drops into another form of morality; in other words, he is seeking by self-effort to overcome self, and the struggle is a hopeless one." --C. Usher

Marcus Rainford refused to stop short of God's ultimate for freedom: "It is not to be a mere passing impression of the mind when we are undisturbed by active temptation; no mere happy frame of spirit when under temporary refreshing from the presence of the Lord; no self-flattering consciousness of a heart exercised in good works; from none of these is the believer to infer his practical mastery over sin, but on the ground that Christ died unto sin, and liveth unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"I must recognize that the enemy within the camp -- the flesh, the old nature, self, I, the old Adam, is a usurper. By faith I must reckon him to be in the place that God put him -- crucified with Christ. I must realize that now my life is hid with Christ in God; that He is my life." --Ian Thomas