

We Were Crucified With Christ

Walking In The Spirit

Perhaps the most difficult thing to find amongst those who call themselves Christians is the reality of a Spirit led walk. Sadly most Christians never progress from babyhood and do not develop into spiritual men and grow to maturity. This sadly means that they continue as men of flesh and never manifest the full victory that Christ has won for His Church.

As babes in Christ we require milk to drink for we are unable at first to eat solid food. Sadly this state may last for many years with few growing spiritually. When minds set on our flesh it is often impossible to tell a babe in Christ from any unsaved man.

Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, "I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is still jealousy and strife, are you not yet fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?" (1Cor.3:1-3) What a sad state of affairs. But is it any different amongst the Church of today?

Admonishing them for their condition, Paul says that he came to these babes in Christ "determined to know nothing among *them* except "Christ Crucified". (cf.1Cor.2:2) This was the starting point of Paul's teaching yet it seems most Christians never even begin at this place of understanding! Instead new Christians are taught the rules and regulations of the particular denomination they have unfortunately found themselves linked to. They are given instructions of their particular denominational tradition rather than the commandments of Jesus. Even regarding scripture they are encouraged to comply with its commands in their own strength. New Christians are not introduced, as they should be, to a Spirit led walk. They are not pointed to their true Teacher, who is the Holy Spirit within them. They do not become disciples of Jesus but rather become disciples of men.

But none come to Christ unless the Father draws them and all, if they have been born again of the Spirit of God, must have that assurance within themselves that can only come as the Spirit Himself bears witness with their spirit that they have become a child of God. (see Romans 8:16) Some who call themselves Christians have been converted and turned to Christ but have never received the Spirit. Conversion is not regeneration. When a person has been born again he *knows* that it is because he has received something from Almighty God. Many who have been born again, after the first excitement and awareness of the spiritual change that has happened to them, slowly lose their first love, and turn the revelation knowledge they've received into an ongoing intellectual walk that still has 'self' as the master of their lives. Endeavouring to deal with ongoing sin in their lives they find that no amount of praying or struggling enables them to stop doing certain things. Sadly they can get used to it and can even come to that place where they no longer recognise the sin that remains in their lives!

Before we are Christians we may have yielded to selfishness in various areas of our lives and in varying degrees. There is no power within the human soul that is capable of breaking this bondage of our old nature except the Lord Jesus Christ. So it is, for our life to really change we must turn - repent - and yield to the Lordship of Christ, making Him our one and only Master and desiring only the will of our new found Heavenly Father, and not our own fleshly desires.

We need to take care we don't think, having been enlightened by the Spirit, that it takes effort and works to change us. It doesn't. This is akin to trying to walk by the Law. No matter how high the standard one reaches for, it is unattainable without the Spirit. We must not 'try' to die. **We have to know we are already dead! We need to know that we 'were' crucified with Christ.**

Questioning 'Death To Self'

We often hear the phrase, 'we must die to self'. There is, indeed, much confusion created by the phrase, 'death to self' in the lives of Christians. Linked to this is our concept of 'self'. We can confuse this with 'selfishness'.

Jesus, when talking to a lawyer about the greatest commandments of the Law, stated that the second commandment was, "You will love your neighbour as yourself." (Matt.22:39) It is evident that unless we love ourselves we cannot love our neighbour as we ought. This seems contrary to the idea that we are to 'die to self'. The actual phrase, however, 'death to self', does not actually appear in scripture. Yet we often hear this given as a Christian's ongoing goal, a reality which makes us think that some effort is required on our part to bring it about. Even if we have never thought about this we might still be 'trying' to walk as we should. This is far from the truth for we are called to walk by faith and not by works of the flesh. **Without realising it we don't consider that we are already dead!**

Jesus said, "He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to eternal life." (John 12:25) The word 'hate' in Greek can be used in the sense of those malicious and unjustified feelings we might have towards others, but it can also be used as the correct feeling of aversion we should have towards that which is evil. It can be used of our preference for one thing over another.

We need to make sense, therefore, of Jesus saying, "If anyone comes after Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:26-27) This hatred of family and of 'ones own life' is by comparison to our love for the Lord and is not contrary to our need to love ourselves or our family. We need to therefore correctly understand Jesus' teaching to love ones life by losing it, correctly understanding that "He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal." (John 12:25)

It was in this last regard that Jesus said, "He who loves his father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me", before going on to say, "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it." (Matt.10:37-39) Of course, we do not hate our family but they must not take precedence above the Lord.

We see that although scripture does not say that we are to 'die to self' Jesus did teach that, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself** and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it." (Matt.16:24) **We might think this is achieved by self effort but we would be wrong.**

In trying to understand exactly what Jesus is saying about '**denying self**', 'losing ones life' and 'hating ones life', we must understand that our old 'man' - our old nature - is now dead and we have become a new 'man' in Christ - "a new creation." (cf.2Cor.5:17)

Crucified With Christ

It is essential for us to understand that our old 'man' was crucified with Christ. **If we have been born again of the Spirit of God we no longer have to die but we have to realise that we are already dead.** We need to understand that on the very day we were born again we died. We *were* - past tense - crucified with Christ so that our body of sin can be done away with and that we should no longer be slaves to sin. And having died with Christ we can now live with Him. (cf.Rom.6:6&8)

The exchange of our lives for His, is complete, yet it eludes us if we do not truly repent and acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord. And although we might declare Jesus to be our Lord, if we *try* to achieve this reality by a walk of the flesh, in our own strength, we are doomed to fail. We must yield our lives to Him. Only then does the power that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit change us and give us the victory over sin that we so desire. It is then, as we walk by the Spirit, that we do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. (cf.Gal. 5:16) And, "If we are led by the Spirit we are not under Law," (Gal.5:18) for we are not called to works of the flesh.

We Must 'Know'

But, it is impossible to "**consider ourselves** dead to sin" if we do not **know** that we were (past tense) crucified with Christ. (cf.Rom. 6:6) '**Knowing**' comes before '**considering**'. Knowing we are dead comes before we can consider ourselves as alive in Christ, raised with Him to new life. Even though the reality that we were crucified with Christ has taken place we can walk as if our body of sin is still alive. Sadly this is the experience of most Christians.

To walk in newness of life we must **know** that we have been united with Christ in the likeness of His death and also in His resurrection. (cf.Rom.6:4&5) Because we cannot believe beyond our spiritual understanding, **knowing** we were crucified with Christ is essential for this walk of faith in newness of life.

Once we **know** that we have died with Christ, and are already dead, we can **consider** ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (cf.Rom.6:11) because we were also raised with Him. We can now present ourselves as alive from the dead and present our members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Rom.6:13) Because we have been freed from sin we can be slaves of righteousness. (Rom.6:18) No longer is it our will that we seek but the will of our Heavenly Father.

Making Jesus Our Lord - Believing Is Not Enough

Many who have believed in Jesus Christ have not confessed Him as Lord, however. It is in confessing Jesus as Lord that we are saved - our own 'self' no longer lord of our lives. Jesus rather than our 'self' is on the throne of our hearts. This we can do because we believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. (cf.Rom.10:9&10)

Confessing Jesus as our Lord, and one and only Master necessitates that we hear His voice and then do what He says. No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit. (1Cor.

12:3) Jesus asked the question, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, and not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46) Once we have confessed Jesus as our Lord all we do, we will do for Him. (cf.Col.3:17)

Many have thought that by believing that Jesus has risen from the dead they will be saved, yet they have not given up their right to themselves! They have never yielded, never abandoned themselves to Christ. They, themselves, are still lord, and they have not in reality confessed that Jesus is their Lord. This exchange of life is the reality that follows repentance. It is not only necessary to believe but “Repent and believe.” Only then do we receive the forgiveness of sins we might desire and only then do we receive the Spirit that changes our life. Many have not yet lost their life that they might gain it.

Many have received the Spirit but nevertheless still walk in the flesh. It appears they have never died!

Many are not truly saved and so are not able to “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” (Rom.13:14) A true walk in the Spirit eludes them.

Our New Life In The Spirit

The new life that we now should live, is to walk by the Spirit. Every believer should be walking in the Spirit. It should be the norm. It is not a solitary walk but a walk of intimacy with our Lord. We might still be able to set our minds on the flesh, either through ignorance or disobedience, but this means that we can miss the high calling of God that should be the reality of every true believer. Many, because they have never truly made Jesus Lord, can embark on the true walk in the Spirit. Every true believer who has been born of the Spirit of God should be setting their minds on the things of the Spirit, not the things of the flesh. The mind set on the spirit is life and peace but the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God, Paul says, and those who are in the flesh cannot please Him. (cf.Rom.8:4-6)

But the good news is that if we have been born off the Spirit we are not in the flesh any longer, if, indeed, the Spirit of God dwells in us. If we are in the Spirit and Christ is in us, though the body is dead because of sin our spirits are now alive because of righteousness. And because the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead now lives in us He will now give life to our mortal bodies through His Spirit who now indwells us. (cf.Rom.8:9-11) A miraculous exchange has occurred! An exchange that flows out from our spirit and soul into our bodies. But it is an exchange we might not have realised or acknowledged.

If we fail to walk as we should a way has been made for our sins to be forgiven, for if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves. But if we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8&9)

Being Led By The Spirit

But if Jesus is truly our Lord we will no longer live according to the flesh but live according to the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the flesh, not by works, but by walking in the Spirit, setting our minds on the Spirit who brings forth the reality that is now available through Christ. It is an exchange we accept and walk in by faith. It is these who are the true sons of God, those who are being led by the Spirit. (cf.Rom.8:13&14)

We Are New Creations

Only if we have been truly born again of the Spirit, having not only believed, but confessed Jesus as our Lord, that we will manifest the very life Jesus came to give. It was as we declared Jesus is Lord by the Holy Spirit that God gives us us a new heart and puts a new spirit within us. God then put His Spirit within us so as to cause us to walk in His statutes and be careful to observe His ordinances, (cf.Ez.36:26&27) If anyone does not have the Spirit of God dwelling in them he does not belong to Him. (cf.Rom.8:9) We have received forgiveness of sins and our sins are forgiven. We are no longer dead in our transgressions but God has made us alive together in Christ, saving us by His grace. We died with Christ. We *were* crucified with Him, and we *were* raised up together with Him and we are seated with Him in heavenly places. (cf.Eph.2:6) In Christ we are a new creation - "If any man is in Christ he is a new creation," (2Cor.5:17) We are born again.

Not Only Dead But Made Alive In Christ

Jesus said, "You must be born again." (John 3:7) but explained that only then can we see the Kingdom of God and only then can we enter it. (cf.John 3:3&5) It remains for us to enter the Kingdom. Even when we are born again we need to understand with our minds the reality of what has happened to our spirits. We need to **know** it is no longer I that lives but Christ that lives in me, so that the life we now live in the flesh we live by faith of the Son of God who delivered Himself up for us. (cf.Gal.2:20) We are then transformed as our minds are renewed. We begin to understand that we have been given a new spirit and our inner man - the real us - is a new creation. Our mental and spiritual understanding catches up with our experience. We need to also understand that we have also been circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the removal of the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ. (Col.2:11) This separation of our inner man from our body of flesh enables us to live by the Spirit as we set our minds on our spirit. We do not need to **try** to achieve a walk of righteousness by works but through faith we are to walk in the newness of life that we already have. We are not to **try** to count ourselves as dead, for we would be doomed to failure, but we must come to **know** that we have already died and have already been crucified with Christ and already raised with Him.

Taking Up Our Cross Daily

The cross we take up, therefore, is not to deny 'self' by works of the flesh but rather walk in this newness of life by the Spirit, **not to do our will but the Father's**. Our daily prayer and our daily desire is that the Father's will be done in our lives, praying, "Father not my will but your will be done." This is not achieved by 'self' control only abandonment to the Spirit within.

The control of 'self' suggests that effort is required to accomplish our walk as believers but such works of the flesh are not effective. We must not be misled by references in some translations of the Bible that speak of 'self control'. The Greek word, "enkrateia", that is often translated as 'self control', is perhaps better translated by the English word 'temperance'. In modern usage 'temperance' may have taken on the limited meaning of abstinence from drinking alcohol or other excesses. Unwittingly we might think that the 'self control' suggested requires an act of will. But 'temperance' is one of the nine fruits of the spirit, a result of a Spirit led walk, not an outcome of the exercise of will, as 'self control' might suggest: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, **temperance**; against such things there is no law. (Gal.5:22&23)

This fruit comes from our 'being' not by our 'doing'. It is the fruit we bear when we walk in the Spirit.

So Paul continues, "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus, the flesh is crucified with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." (Gal.5:22-25). This is the walk we are called to.

Some Bible translations render Galatians 5:24, "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," which suggests that we do this. It is a better rendering that 'the flesh is crucified' for it is a reality we accept for we were (past tense) crucified with Christ if we truly belong to Him.

The concept of 'self-control' as being a fruit of the Spirit is perhaps lost in the English language. Do not let us be misled. Let us be assured that 'temperance', like all other fruit of the Spirit, is displayed and walked in without effort of the flesh. The truth is that if we walk by the Spirit we will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, not because our will is empowered but because our heart is changed: This is victory; "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." (Gal.5:16)

Put On The New Man

So it is we must spiritually understand the reality that has already been accomplished in Christ and put on the new 'man'. This is done by faith. This Greek word for 'man' - "anthropinos" - is often translated as 'self' which may be confusing but Paul differentiates between the old 'man' and the new 'man' - "Put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that is being corrupted after the lusts of deceit; and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (Eph.4:22 - 24) This is the walk that brings us victory.

Paul is telling us to do the same thing when he says that we are to set our minds on the things of the spirit, not the things of the flesh. "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those according to the Spirit, the things of the spirit." (Rom.8:5) This reality is achieved by faith and not by works, and it is the wonderful reality we should have if we have been born again of the Spirit of God.

So let us walk by the Spirit and no longer walk in works of the flesh. This is the new life we have been called to.

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