

Crucified with Christ

by

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"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20).

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:14,15).

These last words the Apostle Paul sums up his important letter to the churches of Galatia, and he emphasizes the great sum and substance, the essence and marrow of the Gospel of Christ, and of true Christianity. This is utterly and entirely opposed to the world and to the world's religion. The world is that which is opposed to the Father (I John 2:16). The world has always been willing to support religion, and even Christianity, provided it has been allowed to alter it, and adapt it, and put its own marks upon it. And in all ages Christians have been willing to comply with this condition, and have allowed its sacred deposits to be tampered with.

To such St. Paul says, "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (Galatians 6:12). It was the fear of the world that constrained Christians to submit to circumcision. They allowed themselves to be made bad Jews lest they should be persecuted for being good Christians. "Marvel not," said Christ, "if the world hate you"; but His followers grew weary of being despised and hated, and so they listened to the world's overtures of peace, and accepted the world's terms to gain for themselves the world's security and luxury. But the world has ever broken its promise, and will yet break it more and more! "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." We cannot purchase peace with the world without losing peace with God. Its last work will be to strip and destroy that church, which has purchased peace at the cost of disobedience to the Lord and by compliance with the requirements of man!

St. Paul's counsel here is, that mere religion without Christ is nothing, is useless, is worthless. Circumcision is useless without Christ, and uncircumcision is useless without Christ, i.e., the old nature in any shape is nothing. Man's thought ever is that it is something, that something can be made of it. Hence no effort-has been spared. In one age restraint has been tried, in another, liberty. In one age discipline cuts it down, in another, indulgence lets it grow. One school advises , and tries monasticism, another believes in the development of man, but no modification of the natural man will suffice; it must be a "new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17, R.V., margin).

Man must be made over again, made anew. This is the great point on which the Apostle lays such stress here. He says, "From henceforth let no man trouble! me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17). There is a double reference in his words, when translated more closely, "Administer not to me your cuts." I need them not, I am crucified with Christ. It is not marks nor brands made by man

upon the flesh that we want, but it is the brands of the Lord Jesus. He was crucified for us, "wounded for our iniquities," and those who are crucified with Christ have His marks on them, and to such can be said, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit (verse 18). This is the cry from Heaven to all who are crucified with Christ, this "grace" in them and with them is the "mark" and "brand" which the world will never countenance and approve.

The world threatens with loss all who are thus marked as the Lord's. But what says He to such? "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." "God shall supply all .your need." We need not fear about not pleasing the world; Christ takes all excuses away. "Take no thought, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'what shall we drink' or 'wherewithal shall we be clothed?'... Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Matthew 6:31, 34). This is godliness, and godliness has the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come.

Thus we see that the Apostle's argument is based on the declaration of our Lord. We see that the only thing we can really glory in is the Cross of Christ, by which we are crucified to the world, because we are crucified with Christ, and this may mean perils and hardships. But there is a very important point connected with this matter -- and it is, that it is a very personal and individual concern. The Apostle says, "I and Me." "I am crucified with Christ... He gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2. 20). This is the glory of the Gospel. The world talks about "man," and would deify "man "; but God, while he has condemned "man," saves "men." Men lose themselves in masses, and attempt to hide themselves in the multitude; but so soon as God speaks He separates one from the other, and deals with individual souls.

The Gospel does not deal with the masses as such; it takes out from the masses "a people for His Name." The Cross

stands out in relation to all who are crucified with Christ. It is not that you have been born in a land where the Cross is honoured; it is not I that you have relations with a church that holds forth the Cross; it is not that you wear a cross, but that you are in living vital union with the crucified, so that you may say, "I have been crucified with Christ." Oh, what a wonderful expression! What a mysterious truth, when a lost sinner comes into the vital experience of it! Then for him these 1,800 years are blotted out, and he counts himself as being on Calvary in Christ.

So real is this great truth that the very crucifixion scene becomes part of our experience. In God's sight, in the Divine view, the saved sinner is identified with Christ. Everything he gets from God is in Christ. He is "chosen in Christ," accepted in Christ, redeemed in Christ, and represented by Christ. Not only is this great fact and truth for every saved sinner, but in measure and in part the very experiences of Christ are ours. There is a sense in which they become true in our experience.

Take, first, His rejection. He was "rejected of men," not rejected of the Father! No. We must make the distinction which the Scripture of truth makes. Not as is commonly said that the Father hid His face from the Son, but it was God against man. "Awake, O sword, against... the man that is My fellow" (Zechariah 13:7) -- "against the man," not against "My Son." "The Son of Man" was "rejected of men," and the penitent soul, the sin-convicted sinner, has this experience. The first thought of such an one is, "I am accursed before God." Never before has the sinner known the terrible weight of Divine rejection till the Holy Law of the Holy God is written by the Holy Spirit on the fleshy tables of his heart. He that has been crucified with Christ enters into the real positions and in measure and in part into the experience of the darkness which overspread the heavens when Christ as man hung upon the cross, being made a curse for us. The death due by the law is realized by such an one; conscience is now for

the first time awakened; sin now for the first time is seen as that which separates from God; and the sinner loathes himself, as he thus enters into the first experience of what it is to be crucified with Christ.

But, secondly, there is, thank God, another experience. There is another view of the Cross of Christ, a Divine view, that of acceptance. If at His baptism and transfiguration the testimony of heaven was, "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," surely it was so here when that Beloved One was accepted; for the holiness of God was then vindicated, the law of God was then honoured, the majesty of God was then magnified, and the same words are pronounced over every sinner who can say, "I have been crucified with Christ." The Father in heaven declares of Him and of every such an one, "My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased," and this, just because he is "accepted in the Beloved." Oh what a mighty reality there is in this great truth! How great the merits of this Saviour who has thus stood in the sinner's place, that the sinner might stand in His! No wonder that of all such the Holy Spirit has written, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." What a perfect satisfaction do we present! Who can measure the glorious answer to the law, the vindication of God's holiness, which the man (who a little while ago was a poor forlorn outcast sinner) brings before God, as soon as by grace he is enabled to say, "I have been crucified with Christ." Ah, this is light that will dissipate our darkness: all our bondage and fear would be instantly gone if we could only realize what it means to be "crucified with Christ."

But more than this is contained in the truth: not only Christ's acts and position are ours, but His words and utterances become in part ours. We know what it is to cry, "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?" It is our cry of felt helplessness; it says, if God should cast us out for ever, "just and true is He." No reason can we find in ourselves, no

ground for our acceptance can we find in our past living or present feelings. If saved at all, it must be by grace. and grace alone; and it shews that even this cry is the result of life which has been given; for though we cry, we say "My – my God." This is the beginning of the end, all else is assured when we can say my God. But the full measure of our absolute unworthiness is never experienced by us until this life and light has been imparted. It was when God said, "Let there be light," that ruin and desolation was seen at its worst, and so it is with the sinner. Talk not about repentance or contrition as a preparation for coming to Christ, for if we "have been crucified with Christ," we will surely experience the horror of this great darkness, but it will be coupled with hope. "My God."

Then another cry, "It is finished." What a blessed confession is this for Christ and for us! He who is crucified with Christ may take it upon his lips, and claim it as his own. His salvation is finished, the work is complete and perfect, nothing can be put to it nothing can be taken from it. Of course, if we mean to be saved by our own merits it will never be finished, and if we hesitate to say this, it is a proof that we are trusting to our own merits. If we are seeking to be saved by anything we can produce, our rest will always be unrest. But if saved by Christ, in Christ, with Christ, "for Christ's sake," then it is presumption if we do not admit to their fullest extent such statements as these, "He that believeth hath everlasting life," "is passed from death unto life," "shall not come into condemnation." It is not presumption to claim these words, but it is presumption, and unbelief too, if we hesitate as saved sinners to confess them. Come, all ye that are going about to establish your own righteousness, all ye that are seeking some other way to the glory of God, listen to this joyful sound of a finished salvation for all who have been crucified with Christ.

We cannot follow all the other thoughts which gather round "Christ Crucified," but there are two other facts that we must not omit. The Apostle says, "By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

What is the relation of the world to the crucified? Ah, it wore a very solemn aspect as the Crucified looked upon it, and he who is crucified with Christ sees it in the same way (in part and in measure). This is more than a figure. What did Paul mean when he said, "If ye be dead with Christ" -- and "Ye are dead"? Not that we are actually dead, but judicially dead in God's sight, and therefore we are so to reckon ourselves. "If ye be dead with Christ," says the Apostle. "If ye then be risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 2:20; 3:1-3). What does this language imply? We are to be blind and deaf and indifferent to the world, as was Christ upon the cross. We are in the world, indeed, but rejected by it, not of it. All the hum and distracting noises fell upon unheeding ears, as they rose from Jerusalem and were wafted by the winds towards Calvary! If we are crucified with Christ we shall know something of this experience; only remember always that it is the effect and not the cause of being thus crucified. We cannot crucify ourselves, we cannot make ourselves dead. How did the Lord Jesus pray? "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). "Let me see life," says the man of the world, and he plunges into sin. "Let me see life," says the saved sinner, and he separates himself from sin. He only lives who is crucified and risen with Christ.

Those who are crucified with Christ know something of His sustaining joy. We are not left to imagine what this was, but we know that "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Great were His sufferings, but greater still His joy. So it will be with us.

This alone will support those who have been crucified with Christ. We shall never know the measure of His sorrow, but we shall know something of His joy. For a joy is set before us, and it will enable us to despise the shame and endure the suffering, and confess that "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians 4:17). Only those who have been crucified with Christ can truly say, "I live" (Galatians 2. 20), and I have the blessed hope of everlasting life. Can we say this? If we cannot, "What is our life?" Your life which you are living for yourselves? Let us not call this life. Let us not call our sinful pleasures joy. For what is our experience? Is it not a consciousness of a disappointed present, and a future without hope? Is it not a heart unsatisfied with earthly objects? Is it not a will at cross purposes with God's will? Do we call this life? Nay, call it what it is, death. Not dead with Christ, not dead to sin, but dead in sins.

May this testimony for the Crucified One quicken us together with Christ, that we may be able to say, "I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loveth me, and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20).