

*A Personal Cross for a
Personal Resurrection*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a world-famous singer was scheduled to tour all around the world. She had a tremendous voice and the tour was bound to be a great success. Suddenly, her father fell sick and became an invalid. She, being his only daughter, immediately cancelled the tour in order to take care of her dad.

Her singing career came to an end right then. "Well, I cannot sing around the world, but I can write songs that others can sing," she said. Soon, she had penned a song that is still being sung around the world: "Brighten the Corner Where You Are."

This woman's hope was not destroyed, because whatever is from God cannot be destroyed. A singing career may have died, but her talent was resurrected in her song writing.

As this booklet will show, what we bring to the Cross of Christ must go through death and burial, just as He died and was buried. But the

most precious thing about the Cross is that it wipes out everything so that all of it that is of God can be resurrected. All that we take to the Cross is soon resurrected in triumph for eternity.

Chapter One

FROM DEATH TO RESURRECTION

According to Genesis 21, before the promised child, Isaac, was born, Abraham had another son, Ishmael. After Isaac was weaned and circumcised, Ishmael began mocking his half brother. Ishmael, representing the natural man, could never serve God's purpose. But Isaac, the child of promise, did serve God's eternal purpose.

The old man can never serve God's purpose. The sad part of it is that many Christianized Ishmaels are out there in the world, trying to represent God. These people do not function in an eternal purpose. Even though they speak things that seem to be of God, the motives of the heart may not be right.

Many marriages and families are not doing well. As individuals, they may be saved and attend church three times a week, but they go as

“Ishmaels” and receive the message as natural men. They may not live in overt sins, but they are natural men, trying to fulfill the purpose of God. What they need is to walk in the plan of God, continually being filled with the Holy Spirit and practicing rebound when they fail.

Isaac was led to the place of death on Mount Moriah. And just as Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, God provided the substitute—the ram in the thicket. That pointed to Jesus—the One who would become the Substitute for us all.

The one who carried the great burden that day was Abraham’s mule. He was saddled with the wood for the burnt offering. On the way home, however, the mule was free. The mule pictured the sinner being weighed down with his burden. But when the weight is gone, then there is freedom.

The Old Comes to an End

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

“For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Romans 6:1-7).

Follow this as we examine the historical death of Jesus Christ. It was part of the greatest historic event of all times. Think of the historical burial of Jesus Christ—the most solemn burial that ever took place. Then came the Ascension, Jesus went to heaven to assume His Session as He sat down at the right hand of the Father.

One of the things Romans 6 teaches us is that everything that is of God is eternal and cannot be destroyed. The Cross removes everything that is not of Him. Everything that is old must come to an end, and what remains becomes new through the Resurrection. His own transformation transforms each of us completely.

God made it possible for every single thing

in Adam to come to an end. What an amazing provision this is for us. It is an absolute reality. Every single sin, every wrong habit came to an end with His historic death and burial. Now, in Christ, everything—without exception—is brand-new because of His historic resurrection.

What God has made cannot be destroyed. The passage in Revelation 19:19 through 20:3 refers to the beast and the false prophet being cast into hell, while Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit for one thousand years. All of them are still alive and in torment. Here is the principle: No one can destroy a soul, because God created it. You cannot destroy a thought or a word. You cannot destroy hope, faith, or love. Many of these things can be taken away from us, but they cannot be destroyed; they go on.

Years ago, a man named Bill Rice and his wife had a little baby girl. They so much wanted that little girl. Soon, they noticed that the little girl did not respond to sounds, and they found out she was deaf. That, however, did not destroy the hope that they had in their precious little girl. Mr. Rice sacrificed and prayed and gave everything he had to buy a ranch in Tennessee. Soon deaf folks from all over the world were coming to this ranch for a great vacation, and

every one of them heard the Gospel preached in sign language. Hundreds and hundreds have been saved through that ministry. The hope they had for their little girl was transferred into a worldwide ministry for the deaf.

Very few Christians really live consistently as men and women who have been crucified with Christ. They know the verses from the Bible. Yet, they do not understand that the Cross wipes out everything that is not of God. Their problems would be so few, their solutions so great, and their prospects so amazing if they just recognized this. Resurrection makes the Word alive, it makes love alive, and it makes faith alive. The Resurrection represents a new starting point for every moment we live in its power.

Chapter Two

THE SOLUTION THAT LEADS TO GLORY

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:8-13).

These verses speak of such a fabulous solu-

tion. For the worst person in the world, here is the solution. For the worst sinner, here's the solution. For depression, for lying, for lusting, for addiction, here is the solution. Here is the solution for pain, for wounds, for hurts, for damaged emotions.

The solution God has given us is this: What God has resurrected cannot be destroyed. I know a man who went through a time at his job when he was lied about and accused of doing terrible things. He was so distraught, but his precious wife said, "Let's take it to the Cross and bury it." So they took it to the Cross and buried it. The Cross proved to be the solution for the pain and wounds that come from attacks of the enemy.

"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

"To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Galatians 1:3-5).

One of the unique things about the Cross is that God wants us to glory in it. God gave His Son to save us from our sins and to save us from this present evil world. This powerful, worldly

system is operated by the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world, and is controlled by his evil infection (see Ephesians 2:2, 1 John 5:18-19, 2 Corinthians 4:4).

God says, "I have given you the Solution. You are guests here in Satan's territory, but his world cannot touch you."

Why? Because of the Cross. Oh, we need to glory in the Cross. The glorying comes from Resurrection power. We make progress when we present ourselves to God as those who have died and as those who have been raised from the dead. That gives us progress. That gives us process. That gives us power.

Bright Lights, Big Rewards

"All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is

sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

“It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory:
it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:39-44).

The sun’s brightness differs from that of the moon. Stars have different degrees of glory. Likewise, we as believers in resurrected bodies will have different degrees of glory. Our rewards will differ. Some of us will attain the highest honor given to men in heaven: the Morning Star Order (Revelation 2:26-28).*

In 1 Corinthians 15:43, we are sown in dishonor, but raised in glory; sown in weakness, but raised in power; sown in a natural body, but raised in a spiritual body. This is the dogmatic, dynamic truth about what happens to those who glory in the Cross.

Everything I take through the Cross lives in God. I have to know the Cross experientially. I need to know that the Cross does more than take care of all of my past sins and iniquities; it also takes care of my present temptations and weaknesses. The Cross does this as I take it up daily.

It is the Cross that brings joy out of sorrow. It

is the Cross that brings joy in the morning, after the tears are cried at night (Psalm 30:5). It is the Cross that keeps hope alive when it has lost its object in this life.

If someone goes against you and hurts you, you will not give up on him, but you take your faith and apply it to another person. Don't stop believing in people just because people hurt you. Your faith doesn't ever die. Your hope never dies. Your unconditional love does not die, because the Holy Spirit goes to work and sheds that love abroad in the heart (Romans 5:5).

** For more about this reward, read The Morning Star Order by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

EDIFICATION AND MEEKNESS

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house” (Psalm 45:10).

“And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given” (Mark 4:24).

“For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool’s voice is known by multitude of words” (Ecclesiastes 5:3).

It is so important to be godly listeners and to be careful with our speech. We have to be careful with what and how we hear as well as what and how we speak. So much of who we are depends upon hearing the Word of God properly, but also hearing the edification that comes from those who are right with God.

One who does not listen in a godly manner cannot be delivered completely from his bondage

to Adam. Furthermore, our speech should be seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6). We should always speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Oh, we need to be careful with this.

If you listen properly, then you will never have to speak improperly. Be very careful how you receive doctrine. Be careful how you hear truth. Be careful how you hear from heaven, from God. Be careful how you listen to people, and learn to give a deaf ear to things that are not of God. Do not listen to things that are not of God.

We need to make sure our words on earth are few. I know a woman who has mastered the right way to receive and to end potentially lengthy telephone calls. She is a gifted, excellent speaker. When she gets a call, she listens for a couple of moments and then graciously ends the conversation. This woman will not let anyone waste her time on the phone. She is careful to manage her time and her schedule.

Sure, there are times when you need to stay on the phone to help someone. But truthfully, it is very important to manage what you hear and what you say. Many people may hear something and then go tell someone else. We need to learn to keep confidences and not to repeat things we

hear, even if they seem innocent. Let your words on earth be few.

Anointed Ears

“And he slew it; and Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron’s right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.

“And he brought Aaron’s sons, and Moses put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and upon the great toes of their right feet: and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about” (Leviticus 8:23-24).

“And of the rest of the oil that is in his hand shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering” (Leviticus 14:17).

Listening is a vital thing. This is why the blood and the oil were placed on the right ear first. It all had to do with hearing. Hearing will always affect my speaking, and my speaking will always affect other people. My behavior is the result of hearing properly and speaking properly. Most of all, I must learn how to listen

and receive with meekness from God.

Just as we learn to receive with meekness the Word of God privately and to have it engrafted in us, we ought to receive with meekness the Word of God from one another. When they tell us the truth about ourselves in the light of Redemption, let's receive their edification in meekness.

Also, we edify God when we edify ourselves. When we edify ourselves through the Word and through the Spirit, we are edifying God because we love Him with all of our hearts. When we can love ourselves, we do not have problems with people.

We need to get to the place where we can say subjectively, through the Holy Spirit, that we love everyone. I may not be able to have fellowship with everyone, but I can love everyone with the love of God.

We may get wounded and become self-conscious; we may feel hurt and then react. We need to practice loving everyone. Mentally, we can practice not letting bad feelings come in when we are alone. God loves each one and He died for each one. Just because someone is not with us and doesn't like us, that does not mean we cannot love him.

We can love him with the same love God had for us when we were against Him, and that edifies us as it edifies God. We speak words of peace and refuse to make negative comments. This is how to be careful in our listening and careful in our speech.

But, to have this kind of love available to us required a Cross. Once we believe that all Jesus said and did is true, we can take up a personal Cross and experience the freedom to love others through the power of a personal resurrection.

CONCLUSION

The Cross is the most precious, dearest thing for our lives. And of course, Satan will try to distract us from it even though we believe in all that it represents. Sadly, a man can believe in the Cross and still not appropriate its power.

A Christian could go all day living cleanly, not committing overt sins, and still not take up the Cross mentally during the day. He could let the little things that are said or done trouble him, and he could be easily hurt all because he failed to experience a personal Cross.

The personal Cross means one thing to me: personal Resurrection. The Cross doesn't just leave me dead and buried; it brings in the newness of life where I can walk in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:6). With that, God guides and orders every step so iniquity will not reign (Psalm 37:23; Psalm 119:133).

Just think of it: we can have right thoughts

that never die, right words that never die, and a right walk that will always make an impact for the glory of God, all by embracing a personal Cross.