

Resurrection Life
through the Cross

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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

So much of what Christians do is done in the power of their own strength. With all we know and do, are we really being effective for God?

God is not interested in our efforts and our knowledge; His desire is that we go through the Cross and accept our death. Only then can we really be used by Him. Anything that comes from our flesh is doomed to be wood, hay, and stubble. It cannot produce fruit that will remain.

Bearing the Cross of Christ is not a burden; it is death, burial, and resurrection life—the kind of life that never dies. Once a believer has experienced the death of the Cross, there is no more dying. The effects of resurrection life carry on through eternity. In this booklet, we look at how we can decrease and let resurrection life take over, making us servants who serve with the Spirit of the Lamb.

Chapter One

THE CROSS IS NO BURDEN

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2: 5-8).

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and *whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it*” (Matthew 16:24-25).

Any time we listen to a message from the Word of God, there are several points to con-

sider:

First, we are responsible for every single Word of God as we hear it.

Second, if the Holy Spirit does not sanctify the Word we hear, we will only have an awareness of theological truth—mere knowledge without power. This results in having a form of godliness that denies the power of God (2 Timothy 3:5).

Third, knowledge that is not experiential may be academically sound, but it does not produce a sound mind. It is simply *gnosis* (an awareness in terms of general knowledge) and not *epignosis* (the precise application and understanding of truth).

Fourth, reputation is how others see us, but character reveals who we are as God sees us. People may be very sincere in their natural temperaments, but sincerity comes from human good and an educated “Adam” nature. True character only comes from God.

So, keeping those things in mind, consider what Jesus was asking when He said we must take up our Cross if we would be His disciples. Taking up our Cross is not taking up a burden. It is not taking up a need. It is not taking up suffering. Taking up our Cross means fellowship-

ping with resurrection life to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ, especially through the fellowship of His sufferings. He made Himself of no reputation; He wasn't concerned with the opinions of men.

Taking up our Cross means we are being conformed to Christ's death that we might have resurrection life (Philippians 3:10). Anything in our lives that does not actually go through death is Adam serving God through knowledge, but not through the life of Christ.

The Dangers of Ministries of Death

In Numbers 16:1-14, Korah led a crowd against Moses. Their charge was that Moses was taking too much responsibility upon himself. They claimed that he was too authoritarian and that he should delegate more authority.

But in Numbers 16:15-29, after hearing from God, Moses said to the people of Israel, "You are going to see what is holy. You will see what is from God. Bring your censers with fire and incense, and gather at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." There, the glory of God appeared to all the people. He warned them all to leave Korah's camp, yet many refused to listen to God's words. After a final plea, God did a

new thing. He opened the ground, and Korah and his allies were swallowed alive (Numbers 16:30-33).

Why would God do that? All they did was criticize. All they did was murmur. All they did was gossip. Why did God kill people for gossiping? He did it because they were participants in a ministry of death.

Even a pastor can easily reinforce ministries of death when people refuse to honor the Word of God through grace, mercy, and love. Because of sentimentality, he may protect their carnality by withholding those things from the Word of God which would convict them of the truth.

A pastor must never interfere with decisions individuals make. Still, he is accountable to God—both for what he says and for what he *doesn't* say (Ezekiel 33:6). Every man of God is charged to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), which will always include preaching the way of the Cross.

Do Things God's Way

In 2 Chronicles 26:16-21, King Uzziah disobeyed God by burning incense in the temple. According to divine decree, only the priests were allowed to do that. Uzziah had nearly fifty-

two years of being a great king, but the Bible says, "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to destruction." He was stricken with leprosy for the rest of his days. Because of patriotism, the prophet Isaiah loved and adored King Uzziah, but it wasn't until the king died that Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up (Isaiah 6:1). Uzziah had a good ministry, but it was not a ministry of life.

In 2 Samuel 6:1-7, after the ark of God was taken back from the Philistines, it was being driven back to Zion on a new cart. The oxen began to stumble and shake the cart, and when it looked as though the ark would fall off, Uzzah tried to steady the ark with his hand. But "the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (2 Samuel 6:7). In Numbers 4, God gave specific instructions on handling the ark. And in verse 15, even those who were permitted to bear it were not to touch it, lest they die. All Uzzah did was try to steady the ark, *but that was not God's way*.

The people of Israel knew the acts of God, but Moses knew His *ways* (Psalm 103:7). If you have a problem in your life, let God teach you how to solve it His way, through His truth and

His life. God's way is life.

Once we have been through the Cross, there is no more dying. Resurrection life is deathless. It is indestructible, immutable, and fruitful. When God chose a leader to assist Moses from among the tribes of Israel, the only one who could stand the test before God was Aaron (see Numbers 17:1-8). It was Aaron's rod that budded, and it was blooming and full of almonds. What does this mean? It was the only rod that bore fruit, and it was the only rod that could stand before God, representing God's authority.

So many people have ministries to people but not to God. A naturally gifted man or woman can minister to many. People will tell them what a wonderful job they did and flatter them in the flesh. Yet, though they are very gifted, their ministry is to men. When they are alone and they think no one sees them, they do not have a ministry to the Lord. Only when we have been through the death of the Cross and take up our Cross daily can we truly minister to the Lord.

Chapter Two
DEVELOPING A MINISTRY
TO GOD

“But the priests of the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, *they shall come near to me to minister unto me*, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD.

“They shall enter into my sanctuary, and *they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me*, and they shall keep my charge.

“And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, *they shall be clothed with linen garments*; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within.

“They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; *they shall not gird themselves with any thing*

that causeth sweat" (Ezekiel 44:15-18).

In this passage, God was saying to the priests, "I want you to come and minister to Me." That was so important, He said it twice. Psalm 73:28 says, "But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works."

He was saying, " I want you to come into My presence with the spirit of resurrection. I want you to be clothed in linen, which is the righteousness of the saints (according to Revelation 19:7-8). I want you to have linen breeches, and linen bonnets, representing an attitude of faith-rest. Don't come with anything that causes sweat (speaking of efforts of the flesh). Remember: Resurrection life is deathless. Resurrection life is indestructible, and it bears fruit. Bring to Me only what you have received from Me."

Some Christians would be far better off fellowshiping less with people and fellowshiping more with God. This does not mean we become independent and withdraw from the Body of Christ. Every Christian ought to spend *more* time ministering to the Lord. This is an area most of us need to pray for.

How can a believer minister to the Lord? By going before God with a broken and contrite

heart, tell Him what you think of Him. Say things such as, “You are precious, God. You are beautiful. I love Your character—Your integrity, Your righteousness, Your mercy, Your grace, Your love, and Your forgiveness. I love Your conviction and Your holiness—Your standards through the Holy Spirit. I love everything about you, Lord.”

Living under Standards

In Israel, every individual had a standard—a banner that identified who they were (Numbers 1:52). Every family and every tribe needed to have a standard. Even when they were captive in Babylon, they had to have a standard on the wall that identified them as the children of God (Jeremiah 51:12).

It is so easy to get up in the morning determined to walk as a child of God and then two hours later to have something frustrating happen that threatens to set us back. Often, when faced with those details of life, we end up giving people the old creation—the old countenance, the old conversation. We end up serving God with strength, abilities, and gifts that have never been through death. We may even project a social status and educated communication that

is culturally acceptable. Yet, the truth of the matter is that if our rod has not budded, it is not acceptable to God.

To have a ministry of life, we must first be broken.* An unbroken vessel can deceive people but cannot deceive God. Unbroken people will give you reasons why they feel the way they do. They will neither have a ministry of reconciliation nor a ministry of forgiveness. They will not have a ministry of edification because they cannot release the life that produces Christ in another.

When we go to God in prayer with an intellect that has never been crucified, we must discourage our angels who have to listen to it! But when we approach God in humility and serve others in meekness, our lives will produce eternal fruit as we reveal the Cross—the standard of the Lord.

**Read The Value of a Broken Vessel, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Three

CONFESSING CHRIST THROUGH FAITH

Let's consider what God has given us and thank Him for it. For three days, the Lord Jesus Christ was in the grave. Then the process of death was completed in Him, and resurrection power came from God the Father through the Holy Spirit. That same power dwells in us as believers (Romans 8:11).

Furthermore, Romans 8:12 says that we are no longer debtors to the flesh. We do not love people because of who they are as objects in the flesh. We don't let the people who are the objects of our love stop us from loving them, and we do not allow them to change us. Love that comes from resurrection life is often unrecognized and unreturned. Therefore, we must express our love according to the Spirit and remember that it is so much better to love than to be loved. Also, love doesn't always give the object what it

wants; but if it is true love, it gives the object what it needs.

The Cross is never a burden—it is always life. Yet often, our so-called crosses are manufactured in the flesh. But the Cross of Christ puts an end to our old creation, and our burial with Him settles the issue forever. Still, many Christians will “Amen” the message, then later reveal through their communication that they never went to the Cross to take it up.

When we minister life, it is because we have been through the Cross. Silent before God, considering what we go through—sometimes screaming frantically, seeking wildly to escape the fate of Adam in the roaring waters that end up at the Dead Sea through the Jordan River of death—we begin to acknowledge the truth of this next statement: We will never have a ministry that glorifies God unless every thought, every step, and every word has been through the Cross.

This is what is meant by Psalm 119:133 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Iniquity has no dominion over us because the Word of God guides our steps. As we bring every thought into subjection, we confess the Lord Jesus through faith (Romans 10:8-9).

Getting at the Root

The Cross doesn't analyze problems; it goes to the root of them. Instead of saying, "I am going through something," we can say, "I have been through something, and I came out on resurrection ground." The Cross doesn't leave us with Adam's need, it leaves us with God's life. I will say it again: Resurrection life is deathless; there is no more death to those who receive it.

The Cross never compares people, saying one is better than another. The Cross doesn't think that way. The Cross thinks in terms of Christ ministering to us through life: It sees value in everyone according to the gift of love that was paid for on the Cross.

Thanks be to God, many of us are growing and learning to say with tears of love and expectation from God, "I must decrease" (John 3:30). And we don't say it in self-condemnation. We don't say it in Adam's old creation. We say it in the new creation, where old things are passed away in the reality of holiness, in the relevancy of the ascended life.

The Cross wipes out the old creation and buries it. Then comes an eternal purpose, an eternal destiny through an eternal plan that offers

an eternal provision. Confessing that you are no good is not a solution for change. Confessing what Christ has done as you, as well as for you, is the beginning of a wonderful change.

It is one thing to “know” that our old man is dead (Romans 6:6a). But the thing that sets a person free is when he takes what he knows and lets it become his experience. That kind of knowledge is not just awareness, but it is experiential acceptance. It is to “reckon” ourselves dead by faith—an act of absolute trust and obedience. We present our bodies to God through His mercies, and we are on the “plain path” of Psalm 27:11, going from strength to strength. We leave behind us pools filled with living waters to give refreshment to the weary ones we meet along the way.

Chapter Four
SERVING IN CONNECTION
TO THE HEAD

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

The Word of God says, “The joy of the Lord is our strength” (Nehemiah 8:10), and we can stop and say, “Yes, it is. It surely is.” We have the joy of forgiveness, the joy of having our expectation from God (Psalm 62:5), the joy of walking in the Spirit and walking in love (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:2), the joy of building up the brethren as lively stones (1 Peter 2:5), the joy of edifying people with our speech (Ephesians 4:29), the joy of praying in the secret closet for the people you love, whom you wish you could help more. It is no wonder Jesus said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be

full" (John 15:11). That joy *no* man can take from you (John 16:22).

It is so crucial that our service would go through death. Most of us are so busy, and we work lovingly with motives that are kind and gracious. But we must continually be aware of what Paul said in Philippians 1:21a: "For to me to live is Christ."

Of course, everything we do is by His grace; and when we fail, we rebound. Still, it is remarkable when we can go forward and minister life by claiming Romans 8:11. We serve in the newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:6). Though we may be physically exhausted, we believe that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us and quickens our mortal bodies. More believers should claim this promise and stop confessing the frail side of life. We live in temporal reality, but we can confess what God says, live in spiritual renewal, and walk in the newness of eternal life (Romans 6:4).

Resurrected Life for Relationships

If my right hand wants to share the pain of my left hand, it must go through my head. There is no other way my right hand can share the

pain with my left hand. And there is no way I can share someone else's pain and empathize with other believers without going through our Head, Jesus Christ.

Christ is the Head of the Body (Ephesians 1:22), and He desires preeminence. Someone who withdraws from the Head and the Body is a careless person who doesn't really believe in the value of the Body of Christ.

Beware of statements that sound right but have an undefined sting of the serpent. The wisdom of the world is fallen wisdom that has never been crucified. Therefore, though the serpent's head is crushed under the feet of spiritual Christians, he is still alive and able to hurt the walk of carnal Christians (Genesis 3:14-15).

We had a sentence of death on our lives, "that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9). But once the Cross has executed its sentence of death, we will manifest the power of resurrected life.

Having the Spirit of the Lamb

Saul witnessed the murder of many Christians, and he saw the Spirit of the Lamb in Stephen (Acts 7:55-60). As Stephen was being

stoned to death, his last words were, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Saul stood by and watched, and surely he began to sense the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He must have thought, "How can Stephen say that? They're stoning him to death!" But Stephen's life had been through the Cross. His negative reactions had been buried; his rights to his old sin nature had ceased to be. And because of it, Saul (who became the apostle Paul) saw the Spirit of the Lamb.

Oh, that men and women would be raised up, hid with Christ in God, and become members in particular of Christ's Body (1 Corinthians 12:27)! When we are bathed in resurrection life, there is no criticism or maligning. Instead, people can touch a life that has been resurrected.

Resurrection life! This is what brings hunger, thirst, and a desire for God. It's the thing that brings growth, grace, and doctrine into a heart. It is experiential power that manifests the devil's defeat, and "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8b).

CONCLUSION

Everything must go through the Head, Christ Jesus. Any ministry we do not perform through the Head may be intellectually correct and theologically stimulating, but it will not result in life. But when we are filled with God's eternal purpose that glorifies Jesus Christ, resurrection life spills out like a river and flows into the streams of consciousness of others.

Father, You have blessed us with Your presence, with Your truth, and with Your New Creation. Help us to feast with You as we eat the Lamb and drink the Blood of the New Covenant.

We stand at an even place, every one of us. No one is higher. No one is lower. No one is greater. No one is less. We stand at an even place in our position in Christ, ready to experience resurrection life, from faith to faith and glory to glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.