

Take My Cup

Showing forth the Lord's death

Victor Hall

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Victor Hall, Murray Wylie – Brisbane Christian Fellowship BCF

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c/- Toowoomba Christian Fellowship

10 Old Goombungee Road

Toowoomba QLD 4350

Phone: +61 1300 885 048

Email: info@visionone.org.au

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1. The Cup

Simply, the cup which Christ accepted in Gethsemane is also offered to us – hence our title, *Take My Cup*.

The ‘Lord’s death’ on the cross, in what it really means, should be visible in the Christian community – hence our sub-title, ‘Showing forth the Lord’s death’.¹

Let us consider three key Scriptures: ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. *Take this cup* away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.’²

‘So Jesus said to them, “You will indeed *drink the cup* that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptised with you will be baptised”.’³

‘Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, “*Take this and divide it among yourselves*”.’⁴

1 1 Cor 11:26

2 Mark 14:36

3 Mark 10:39

4 Luke 22:17

1. The cup

While the expression ‘take My cup’ is not found in any single Scripture, the verses we have just read make the picture clear. First of all, in the garden of Gethsemane prior to His death, Jesus accepted a ‘cup’ from His Father. Secondly, we read in the earlier discussion with His disciples that they, and we likewise, would indeed drink the same cup. And in the third reference we read that at the Last Supper before His death, Jesus asked His disciples to take the cup – explaining that ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you’.⁵ Much later Paul called it the ‘cup of blessing’.⁶

So, clearly, the several Scriptures related to the cup all contain the same heartfelt bidding: take My cup! When we link this with the call for every disciple to ‘take up his cross’, and with Paul’s admonition to ‘show (proclaim) the Lord’s death’, the subject becomes very striking indeed.⁷ And there are many crucial questions to ask. What was the cup that He accepted? Are we able to drink this same cup? ‘Are you able to drink the cup ... you will indeed drink My cup.’⁸ Was this the cup of man’s sin and guilt? Was this a cup of cursing? If so, how do we participate in it, and how is it turned into a cup of blessing?

His vicarious death

Traditionally we have thought of Christ’s death as being in our stead. ‘Christ died for us’, we read.⁹ We have thought of Him as a substitute, a scapegoat, one who has accepted our punishment, forgiven our sins, and offered us eternal salvation. But if this is the case, how are we to drink His cup? In what way do we participate in taking up the cross, and in showing forth His death? We must decide if the death of Christ is purely an action of *substitution*, Christ for us, or

5 Luke 22:20

6 1 Cor 10:16

7 Matt 16:24; 1 Cor 11:26. In 1 Cor 11:26, KJV uses ‘show’; NKJV translates ‘proclaim’; Gr. *katangelo* (*kat-an-gel-lo*); to proclaim, declare, preach, show, speak of, teach. Note the connection between this word and *angelos*, the messenger, whose task it is to proclaim the message of the Lord’s death.

8 Matt 20:22-23

9 Rom 5:8

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whether it is a genuine *vicarious*¹⁰ action in which He did ‘*taste*’ the death of every man.¹¹ A vicarious action is one experienced as an actual participation in the experience of another. If He merely substituted for us, then our only participation is to believe in His wondrous work. However, we discover that Christ’s action was one in which ‘One died for all’, and therefore ‘all died’.¹² It was a vicarious experience, ‘once for all’.¹³ And, more than this, it was an inclusive experience, one in which we must now participate by taking up the cross and drinking the cup in that portion allotted to us.

The gospel of ‘substitution’

To highlight this vital point further, we should observe that the global Christian community is mostly absorbed with magnifying the virgin birth, the heroic Victim, the resurrected Saviour and the dragon-defying King. The quaint trappings around His birth, the cost of His devotion, the magnitude of His sufferings and the facts verifying His Godhood are expounded upon, both by highly sophisticated academics and populist entertainers, in graphic realism and artistic surrealism, as if to convince us that we simply *must* believe. In the faint glow of a ‘substitutional’ gospel, hearers grope in the darkness for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. With Christ as a substitute, forgiveness is easily found – or at least presumed upon. There is no need to accept accountability for past or present and no reason to take up the cross as a way of life. The terror of this revolution in fundamentalism is that believers are less likely than ever before to embrace the notion of participation in His cross, suffering with Christ, enduring sufferings

10 We distinguish here between substitution and vicarious experiences, since the former leaves no sense of the participation of the one replaced. Rather, we discover that Christ’s action in which ‘One died for all’, and therefore ‘all died’ was a vicarious experience for all. And more than this it was an inclusive experience, one in which we may now participate by taking up the cross and drinking the cup in that portion allotted to us. 2 Cor 5:14.

11 Heb 2:9

12 2 Cor 5:14

13 Heb 7:27

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‘for His sake’, and ‘carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested’.¹⁴ The next result, as we are seeing across the Christianised western world, is that if Christ, our conquering hero, is believed to be on *our* side, then all our well-meaning actions are justified.

For our sake

Yes, the cross *was* for *our* sake. Indeed, our first understanding must be that there is no aspect of His cross that is entirely *His* alone – for His own sake. Unlike an Old Testament priest who entered the tabernacle ‘first for His *own sins* and then for the people’s’, Christ fulfilled this ‘once for all when He offered up Himself’ and ‘entered the most holy place’.¹⁵ Christ the Son of God did not need to suffer to resolve an internal dilemma within the Godhead. The cup and subsequent cross were for our sake. There is no aspect of our suffering that was not included in His cup, and there is *no aspect of His cross in which we are not called to participate*.

Our aim in *Take My Cup* is to state as briefly as possible what the cross means. What does Christ’s death, the *Lord’s death*, mean to us? And what does it mean to ‘proclaim the Lord’s death’, as Paul says, referring to communion?¹⁶

Our conclusion will be that we are to *show* His death. We are to be the visible manifestation of His death, in every sense. That body of people who drink the cup are sharers in what the cup means. Their sufferings are those of Christ Himself. Their life of participation is as much the cup as Christ’s cup itself, and as much the cross as the cross itself. Those seekers who come within the sound of their gospel or the sight of their intercessory lives can, and will, be saved as they are baptised into ‘the likeness of His death’.¹⁷

14 2 Cor 1:5; 4:10

15 Heb 7:27; 9:12

16 1 Cor 11:26

17 Rom 6:5

Included in His cross

Gospel preaching has just one central aim – to connect hearers to the cross. The gospel is preached so as to convince hearers that they are included in that one death at Calvary. ‘For the love of Christ compels us, because we *judge thus*: that if *One died* for all, then *all died*.¹⁸ This is curious at first, but compelling once it dawns upon us. This is what men must be caused to see! Paul spoke of preaching ‘to make all men see’ what is the fellowship of the mystery – ‘of the cross’, we could add. Christ included us all in His death. *All men are included in that death whether they accept it or not*. Those who hear the gospel and see, are convinced that they are to be fellows in the cross, where sin can be removed and death itself is put to death. Those who believe they are included may take up the cross (‘yoke’, or ‘cup’) and enter into the cross as a living process of salvation. To these ones, the cross is the power of God.¹⁹ Those who do not believe they are included, who see the cross as foolishness, are nevertheless included. They are included in the eternal death that Christ died, and so remain under judgement forever.

It is not as though we are in a neutral position, evenly poised between death and life. We are ‘condemned already’; we are ‘dead in trespasses and sins’.²⁰ We are all included in His death, either in the dimension of eternal death *for* sin, or in His death *to* sin.

This choice as to how we die with Christ is clearly illustrated by the two thieves alongside Jesus at His crucifixion, both of whom literally died with Christ that day. One accepted the justice of his situation and so understood himself to be included in the Saviour’s death. ‘Remember me’, he asked, and was assured of salvation.²¹ The other thief pleaded the injustice of his plight. He missed the fact that

18 2 Cor 5:14

19 1 Cor 1:18

20 John 3:18; Eph 2:1

21 Luke 23:42-43

22 1 Cor 11:25

1. *The cup*

the Saviour was including him in His death, if only he would believe. That thief was abandoned to the judgement of eternal death, having failed to participate with Christ.

Remembrance

Simply then, when I look at the cross, I need to see myself as included there. We could say that we are remembered in the cross, just as the thief on the cross beside Jesus said, 'Remember me'. Our aim now is to remember Calvary by actually taking up our participation in His cross.

Paul speaks of 'remembrance' in relation to our participation in the 'cup' of communion.²² Remembrance is not to do with history, with reliving the cross, or with recounting the cross as if it resolves some sort of 'legal' dilemma to do with forgiveness. We must not put the cross on a far away hill as an icon of objective fascination. Remembrance is the strongest possible association of myself *with* the cross, not in the sense that *I* am hanging there, but in the sense that *He* has included me in that operation that deals with sin, and makes peace. In every sense, life is now a continual remembrance of that operation of God.

How is this possible? By participation – and we must now give ourselves to understanding participation. It is only by being 'partakers of the altar' that we remember the effectiveness of His offering.²³ It is remembered as it is proclaimed in my life. The cross is revised and remembered because it is working in me here and now. I am accepting my share in the cup. I am being disciplined and trained by suffering, and sin is being removed from my life. 'Since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with *the same mind*, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.'²⁴

23 1 Cor 10:18-19

24 1 Peter 4:1

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Christ is not suffering again and again, for He has already drunk the full cup, the entire experience of every sinner. His cross is a finished work. The point of this is that we may *not* re-offer Christ by failing to allow His one death to include us and change our lives. We may not 'crucify' Him 'again' as if His death was not adequate to change our lives.²⁵ If we fail to participate in a worthy, discerning manner, Paul says we are 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord'.²⁶ So, clearly, it is possible to so fail in participation as to be guilty of casting His body and blood back on the altar. We shall say more about this later.

25. Heb 6:6

26. 1 Cor 11:27

2. Dimensions of the cross

In earlier studies we sought to unveil the meaning of Christ's death by examining the cross in its three dimensions – *our* death, *His* death, showing *forth* His death (*Unto Perfection*) – and the cross *for* us, *including* us and working *in* us (*Upon This Rock*). We have also noted the same theme in Romans chapter five, where Paul speaks of 1. His death for our sins, 2. Being saved by His life, and 3. Receiving the ministry of reconciliation.²⁷ In various ways, the New Testament apostles, using terms such as 'much more', 'also' and 'not only that', seek to urge upon us the need to look beyond our first impressions of the cross to comprehend its depths.²⁸ In particular, the message is that we must not only *believe*, but *participate*; and not only participate in the cross, but *fulfil* the work of the cross by showing it forth as a community who drinks His cup.

In our present study, we shall once again keep these three dimensions in mind by referring to *believing*, *participating* and *fulfilling*.

27 Rom 5:8-11

28 Rom 5:3,9,10,11

In the *first* case, we *believe*. We see Him ‘lifted up’, we ‘look on Him whom [we] pierced’ and we believe.²⁹ In so doing, we apprehend our accountability for and to the cross. We see that we have been included in His death. We respond by being baptised, whereby we are ‘united together in the likeness of His death’.³⁰

In the *second* case, we *participate*. We exercise ourselves toward participating in all the processes that are demonstrated in the cross – removal of sin, circumcision, chastisement, maturity.

In the *third* aspect, we show forth and *fulfil* the Lord’s death. We focus on the call to ‘fill up’ our portion of the ‘sufferings of Christ’ for the sake of His body.³¹ The effective work of the cross is fulfilled as the cup which Christ drank is measured to us, and as we fill up those aspects of suffering by which salvation is ministered to others.

The cross, just like His cup, is ‘once for all’ – one full expression for all mankind in all ages, in all aspects of death, accomplishing life for all.³² Our question then is, ‘How do we participate in the cross, so as to fulfil its effective work, within *our* generation, as part of the eschatological fulfilment of what *was* expressed, once for all?’

29 John 3:14; John 19:37

30 Rom 6:5

31 Col 1:24

32 Rom 6:10; Heb 7:27

3. The meaning of the cup

So we must closely examine the question, ‘What is the cup?’ What is the meaning of the cup? ‘You will *indeed* drink My cup.’³³ By this time in our study, we may indeed be willing to drink the cup, but now we need to understand how to participate, in practical terms, through faith. But first of all, let’s consider what Paul is saying about the communion cup.

‘The cup [which we drink], *is it not* the participation ... ?’.³⁴ In effect, Paul is saying (paraphrased): ‘The cup! What is it?’ What is the cup? What does it mean? What does our sharing of the communion cup mean? It means that we are participating. Participating in what? In the blood of Christ. What does the bread mean? It means that we are participating in the body of Christ. Obviously, these are large subjects, but let us begin by accepting the plainness of Paul’s teaching. The actions of eating and drinking are as much an identification with, and

33 Matt 20:23

34 1 Cor 10:16

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a participation in, the blood and body of Christ as there can possibly be. And Paul supports this point in the verses that follow. Let us proceed, as Paul does, from chapter ten of first Corinthians, into chapter eleven.

Proclaiming the Lord's death

After discussing idolatry (see below) and the order of headship, Paul takes up the subject of communion once again. After warning of factious modes of participation, he comes to his crowning passage, including the statement, 'For as often as you *eat* this bread and *drink* this cup, you *proclaim the Lord's death* till He comes'.³⁵ So let us restate the question, 'What is the cup?'. We must conclude that the cup, in its full dimension, when we look beyond the chalice or the Christian church service, is describing *that active participation that is as much the Lord's death, as the Lord's death itself!* This is startling, and needs careful reflection. If this is so, then the *cup*, once understood as a complete statement, is as much the cross *as the cross itself*, and is as much the *altar* as the altar of offering to which Paul alludes in his earlier passage.³⁶ And the crowning conclusion to this is that the only place that others can see and find the active cross, is in the active Christian community – in you and me.

Now we can see why pointing merely to Christ's substitution will rob hearers of any access to the reality and power of God in their lives.

Idolatrous altars

Curiously, Paul continues by contrasting 'the cup' with idolatrous altars. Why so? The communion cup, according to Paul, is not just the vessel holding wine. The cup is a total picture of corporate worship – with an altar and worshippers, all involved in a sacred feast. It is in this sense that Paul compares our participation in 'the cup' to an

35 1 Cor 11:26

36 1 Cor 10:18-19

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idolatrous altar. In fact, he goes further to say that the communion can itself become an idolatrous altar!

Taking this point slowly, let us ask, ‘What is the essential principle of idolatry?’ ‘How might the communion cup become idolatry, when considered in the light of the truth of participation?’

Partakers of the altar

On the positive side of his argument, Paul indicates that those who approached the Old Testament altar were indeed *partakers* in that altar. They were not onlookers; they were participants. ‘Observe Israel after the flesh: are not those who eat of the sacrifices *partakers* of the altar? What am I saying then?’³⁷ In what way were they partakers? They were not merely casting offerings on the altar instead of offering themselves! They were not merely offering *substitutes*. They were *partakers* of the altar, for they were offering *themselves*, not animals *instead* of themselves.

Paul is most deliberate in this whole discussion, and with Paul we must ask ourselves, ‘Why? What am I saying then?’³⁸ And what is Paul saying? Why does he preface this discussion on communion with a reminder of the ‘golden calf’ incident in Israel’s history? ‘And do not become *idolaters* as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to *eat and drink*, and rose up to play”.’³⁹ Note the reference to eating and drinking, one that carries Paul forward to his teaching on communion. The warning about idolatry is repeated several verses later. ‘Therefore, my beloved, flee from *idolatry*. I speak as to wise men; *judge* for yourselves *what I say*. The cup ...’⁴⁰ We simply must look closely at what is being said.

Here is the point. Are we offering ourselves *to* Christ, to partake of Christ and participate *in* Christ, or are we *offering Christ*, in the mode

37 1 Cor 10:18-19

38 1 Cor 10:19

39 1 Cor 10:7

40 1 Cor 10:14-16

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and manner of idolaters? Are we offering Him again and again by placing His once for all offering back on the altar? How might we do this? As we said above, we may do this in the same sense as crucifying Him ‘again’ – that is, *by failing to avail ourselves of His sacrifice*, and by failing to participate in His one efficacious atonement.⁴¹ If we see Him and make Him a mere substitute in our place, we are not compelled to respond to His vicarious death by participating in it.⁴²

Appeasement?

Returning to Paul’s argument, let us paraphrase what he is saying. Over there in the heathen community, Paul is reasoning, worshippers are offering something instead of themselves. They are substituting appeasements on the altar, so as to avert the wrath of the gods and evoke their favour. So Paul adds, ‘What am I saying? Am I suggesting that an idol is something significant?’ What Paul was doing was contrasting the truth of Christian participation with an idolatrous approach to the communion table – one that sought a form of pagan appeasement, as if Christ was the great scapegoat that appeased the wrath of an angry God. This kind of religious teaching is as prevalent now as it obviously was then. So much presentation of Christ is as an innocent infant growing to a Greek-style champion whose death was so violent, whose victory was so replete, and whose appeasement of God’s law was so masterful, that we are convinced by logic, science, emotion, art, drama and music that we should believe in Him. Is this the way we understand and present the gospel? If we are not careful, Paul is warning us, we will behave like idolaters who, in effect, put Christ back on the altar by our legal assertions and creedal anecdotes. We cast Him up, by our religious professions, as a substitute, a kind of pagan appeasement offering, so that we can clean our slates and feel better.

41 Heb 6:6

42 See footnote 10 comparing ‘substitution’ with ‘vicarious’ experience.

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As a practical illustration, let us imagine we are aroused to anger. If we were to claim a righteous, justified position through Christ our 'substitute', then we might ignore God's discipline that could bring change to our anger. Rather, we choose to participate in His sufferings, in the contrary situations facing us, so that the anger will be put to death. We 'arm [ourselves] also with the same mind' as Christ, 'for he who has suffered in the flesh has *ceased from sin*'.⁴³

In 1 Corinthians chapter ten, Paul is shocking us into deciding, deep within, whether the cross is a legal and fundamentally idolatrous appeasement – or whether it is the 'cup' of participation in His death, in the Lord's death, a fellowship in the cross, a partaking of the true altar. Have we come together, Paul is asking, to partake of the sacrifice and to make a covenant by sacrifice? Or, in effect, is Christ cast back on the altar by a recitation of legal propositions about the price He has paid for our sin? It can be as though, according to Paul, we are offering Christ again and again by non-participation. Or are we joining Christ and drinking of His cup? These are vast questions, and ones which compel us to ask ourselves how the cross is to be understood. Later in our study, this reflection must carry across all the truths of the Scripture – propitiation, atonement, redemption etc – to be sure that we have rid ourselves of any view of the cross as a kind of 'legal satisfaction'.

Forgiveness

To point forward in our study, we will consider the matter of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not about the mere removal of *debt*, but the removal of *sin*. God did not have to pay a price to His own law, or to Satan, for our release. Certainly He embraced the full price of our contrariness within Himself, within His own fellowship. But God could have chosen to forgive us without requiring a scapegoat. After all, we are told to forgive and to release others from any offended or

43 1 Peter 4:1

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vindictive response. Truthfully, God is not vindictive and could have forgiven our debt, but the problem of *our excluding of ourselves* from His supreme fellowship would have remained.

Fellowship – the Lord’s death

We can see here how carefully we must examine the cross to release the truth from all legal interpretation, so that we can understand, participate in, and take His cup. As stated earlier, we must decide if the death of Christ is purely an action of substitution, or whether it is a genuine vicarious action in which He did taste the death of every man. If what He accepted was *our* death, then we *all* died in Him! And if we all died in Him, then we are to live ‘no longer for [ourselves], but for Him who died ... and rose again’.⁴⁴ To live ‘for Him who died’ means that we only ever live in participation. Communion is an exercise in measuring the integrity of our participation. Wherein might we have drawn back from genuine participation? ‘For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.’⁴⁵

To live for He who died means that we join ourselves, through faith, to that living fellowship of believers which is the *body* of Christ, to that fellowship that *is* Christ. ‘For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.’⁴⁶ In this fellowship of the blood, and nowhere else, the blood is actually working to cleanse us.⁴⁷ In this fellowship of the body, *and nowhere else*, the Lord’s death is being proclaimed. Independent, religious attempts to appropriate cleansing by His blood may actually be casting Christ back on the altar as if to crucify Him again.

Christ showed forth the Lord’s death – the complete rendition of God’s atoning work. We now show forth the Lord’s death by

44 2 Cor 5:15

45 1 Cor 11:31-32

46 1 Cor 10:17

47 1 John 1:7

3. *The meaning of the cup*

participating in Christ's life and sufferings. The bread and wine *are* the cross. The cross is not visible if it is removed into objective abstraction, like a work of art on a gallery wall, or like a theological treatise on a book-shelf. When we are walking worthily, each of us is the visible cross, not in the whole of its efficacy, *but in that portion that is ours by participation*. The cross is only visible and potent in that fellowship of believers who are obedient to the word.

Note: we don't construct or compose the fellowship. The fellowship is already there. When we lay our lives down into this fellowship, a fellowship in Christ's sufferings, and when we keep faith with one another to the death, this is the fellowship of the mystery.

4. Once for all

Let us dwell upon the meaning of ‘once for all’ – a pivotal thought. The cross is one complete experience for all experience. ‘We judge thus: that if *One* died for all, then *all* died.’⁴⁸ The cross, if we see it as the entire passage of suffering from the Last Supper to Calvary, embraces all the suffering for all men for all time. It does not merely *represent* all suffering in a token manner. His is not a representative death, but an inclusive death. Death in all its forms, for all men and for all time, is expressed there. The cross is the full description of

- the essential nature of sin
- the consequences of sin
- the chastisement for the removal of sin, and
- the suffering pathway for growth in obedience.

In Isaiah’s beautiful words, ‘*All* we like sheep ... we have turned, *every one* ... and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us *all*’.⁴⁹ His was an inclusive death. There is no form of contrariness, no curse, no

48 2 Cor 5:14

49 Isa 53:6

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consequence, no discipline and no suffering that is not fully embraced in the cross. The result is that each and every man, woman and child, for all time, in any distress, judgement, chastisement or suffering, may look and see that each and every small taste of the cup is comprehended in His one and only cup for all. It is not just that our various tragedies are *represented* there. No, much more. Every *iniquity* has been laid upon Him; every resultant *judgement* has been laid upon Him; every *chastening* experience has been laid upon Him, and every *maturing* lesson in obedience has been carried through until change has been wrought and declared by resurrection. He is able to ‘save to the uttermost’ because He offered Himself ‘once for all’, and yet remained ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, *separate* from sinners’.⁵⁰ It is the fact that He was ‘made to be sin’ for us, while remaining *separate* from sin, that is the centrepiece of Christian faith.⁵¹

Death to sin

Our next point of focus is contained in the first part of the same verse in Romans. ‘For the death that He died, He *died to sin* once for all.’⁵² There is much to say about this pivotal verse. Beginning simply, we must concur with what the Scripture says, that the summary of the visible death He died, with everything considered, was an active *death to sin*. In the final analysis, His death is registered as a death *to sin* – even though it was a death *for sin*, *because of sin* and the death *of sin*. We shall speak more on this later. What does ‘death to sin’ really mean? It’s clearly vital to Paul’s argument because he instructs us ‘likewise’ to ‘reckon [ourselves] to be *dead* indeed *to sin*, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord’.⁵³ So His inclusive death was defined as a death to sin. And to repeat the point, His death to sin *was an inclusive death*. This labouring of the point carries us on in the direction of our goal.

50 Heb 7:25-27

51 2 Cor 5:21

52 Rom 6:10

53 Rom 6:11

How did He die to sin?

In expanding upon these reflections, we can only say that as each vile attribution, curse, chastisement and trial was laid upon Him, His attitude in *offering* Himself and laying down His *own* life, meant that He distinguished Himself as ‘separate’ from sin and alive to God.⁵⁴ He was ‘made’ sin, and yet He died *to* sin.⁵⁵ In every onslaught that could have incited Him to sin, He offered Himself as apart from sin and so died *to* sin. The ‘cords’ and pains of death were drawing Him down.⁵⁶ The ‘floods of ungodliness’, the sorrows of Sheol and the snares of death were terrifying Him.⁵⁷ He was absorbing and embracing the entire mass of contrariness. He was drinking the cumulative experience of all sinners for all time. Reproach, shame and dishonour were breaking His heart, while gall and vinegar were his food and drink.⁵⁸ In this way, He gathered up sin into a kind of ‘body’, the body of sin. He gave it substantial form, as if it has a life of its own – just the way Paul speaks: ‘no longer I ... but sin that dwells in me’.⁵⁹ In a later chapter we will show how He then destroyed this ‘body of sin’ in all its complex and sinister machinery. The law of sin and death was completely undermined. He fulfilled the law, overcame sin and abolished death.

Under such a weight, conceivably, He might simply have collapsed beneath the waves. Certainly this was a ‘baptism’ – ‘the baptism that I am baptised with’.⁶⁰ And as the psalmist said, using prophetic language, ‘Your waves and billows have gone over me’.⁶¹ Instead, He cried out to the Father.⁶² His death was an offering of Himself, so that no man took His life from Him.⁶³ He was made to be sin. He was not

54 Heb 7:26

55 2 Cor 5:21

56 Psa 18:5 NASU

57 Psa 18:4

58 Psa 69:19-21

59 Rom 7:20

60 Mark 10:38

61 Psa 42:7

62 Psa 18:6

63 John 10:18

4. *Once for all*

simply the scapegoat-murderer upon whom all murderers could gaze with relief. He was not merely crushed and broken by the weight of His epic duty. His death was an action of faith, and an offering within the consolation of eternal relationship. He died to everything that could have held Him captive in the grip of eternal blackness. He died to sin by committing Himself into the hands of the Father.

Most wondrously of all, as we read in the prophetic psalm, even though ‘all His judgements were before me ... I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.’⁶⁴ Wonder of wonders. We must pause to apprehend the heart of our Redeemer. While tasting the vileness of sin, the terrors of eternal exclusion, the Father’s chastisements, and the ultimate tests of obedience, nevertheless He remained blameless and His hands remained clean. He touched what was accursed (devoted⁶⁵), as did Achan at Jericho for example,⁶⁶ in such a way as to ‘become a curse’ for us.⁶⁷ At the same time He remained devoted (same Heb. *cherem*) to the Lord. This explains how He put sin to death, igniting the everlasting burnings that would leave sin outside the camp for ever.⁶⁸ This is the death that only He could die. This is what He accomplished for us, vicariously. So the nature and success of the death He died is now found to lie in His ability to offer Himself to the Father as one who could touch and be touched by sin, in all points, yet remain indifferent to sin, impervious to the collusion of iniquity, and holy unto God. ‘For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in *all*

64 Psa 18:22-24

65 Heb. *cherem*, devoted, dedicated to destruction, therefore ‘accursed’, is also used of a ‘devoted thing’ that is most holy unto the LORD.’ Lev 27:28. In this word is the precise explanation as to how Christ touched the curse (*cherem*), while remaining blameless and devoted (*cherem*) to the LORD.

66 Josh 7:1; 22:20

67 Gal 3:13

68 Heb 13:12

4. Once for all

*points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*⁶⁹ This is the inclusive triumph that won our salvation. And the pinnacle of this truth is that here and now, *the message of the cross grafts and unites us into this kind of death.* We are joined to that competent, trusting Saviour who could remain blameless while all the sin was heaped around and upon Him, as much as if He were the serpent of all serpents.

A multitude brought forth

All our corruption, our deathly dying, is seen to be resident and included in Him, while nevertheless He remained blameless and finally died to sin. He carried this exercise into the place of eternal separation. And just before the ‘mouth of the pit’ closed, He cried out to His Father to be drawn out of ‘many waters’.⁷⁰ What inexpressible love and holiness! By remaining blameless whilst being blamed, by maintaining trust whilst forsaken, by calling on the Father’s name whilst defamed, He shook off the cords of hell into the deepest eternity, and arose to meet the Father under the shadow of His wings. This is how He kept the faith – and thereby demonstrated that kind of faith which was an element of His intrinsic life. This dying-living, living-dying, was ‘the faith of the Son’⁷¹ – that faith by which we now seek to live.

This was the birthplace of a multitude, for we discover that He approached the Father singing praise in the midst of His brethren.⁷² He journeyed alone until He arrived at this point of ultimate offering where the Father could accept the multitude of sons, Christ’s brethren, who were now visibly included in the inclusive offering that He made. Christ laid His life down for one reason and in one context only – for His brethren.

69 Heb 4:15

70 Psa 69:15; 18:16

71 Gal 2:20

72 Psa 18:49; Heb 2:12

The Son's life – resurrection life

He was not merely dying instead of each and every criminal. Rather, carrying all criminality, all sin, all corruption upon Himself, He journeyed outside the camp and cut sin adrift from Himself. By standing apart from sin, He put sin to death. Indeed, well before the resurrection declared Him incorruptible, He presented Himself to God in cleanness of heart and with blameless hands. In this triumph, the very nature of His intrinsic life as the Son, His seed-life, His death-life, His resurrection life was being declared.

He had always possessed this resurrection life as the express image of the Father's *zoe*-life. Now it was made known and made available to a multitude of sons. Ever after this, those who wished to have eternal life could likewise receive, grow and manifest this seed-life of the Father as a dying-living, indestructible quality. This was the life of the Melchizedek order – the power of an endless (Gr. *akatalutos*, indestructible) life. It is when the Father's *zoe* is manifested in the Son, in those who are in the corporate Son, that eternal life is manifested. There is only one place in heaven and earth where *zoe*-life can grow – in the Son. It is this fact – that the Father's life can grow, that it can grow up, as Christ did, from 'tender plant' to one hundred-fold harvest in many sons – that forms the gospel report. 'Who has believed our report?'⁷³

5. Through Eternal Spirit

It is useful to reflect now on how one man, the Son of Man, could be the full expression of suffering, and not just the representation of it. How was this possible? How could He have endured all the manifold miseries of all men across the whole of time, without suffering ten thousand years of physical and emotional torture since the world began? How could He do this if He was genuinely a single human being like us? We are told that He ‘offered Himself’ to this end, ‘through *Eternal Spirit*’.⁷⁴ We are also told that ‘by the *grace* of God’ (the Father) He was enabled to ‘taste death for every man’.⁷⁵ These are our keys. Let us comment on the link between Eternal Spirit and the grace of the Father as mentioned here.

We have written elsewhere on the subject of Eternal Spirit, but let us reflect in this manner. That capacity which is unique to God, the capacity of *love*, is that ability as three persons, in Spirit, to encompass eternity. We must first anchor the thought that Yahweh, ‘I AM’, is one

74 Heb 9:14

75 Heb 2:9 KJV

5. Through Eternal Spirit

step beyond eternity, in that the three persons conceived the Everlasting Covenant. Christ is called the 'Beginning of the creation of God', and 'the Beginning and the End', because He is the sum of that event called the Everlasting Covenant.⁷⁶ Time itself is yet another beginning: 'In the *beginning* God created ...'.⁷⁷ The expression 'Eternal Spirit' describes the capacity of Yahweh to encompass all that could ever be implicit in eternity. This is the capacity therefore to embrace and inscribe within Himself as three persons, manifested in the one name – 'Lord Jesus Christ' – the entire process of conceiving, growing and maturing a multitude of fathered sons in one Spirit. The outcome of this Eternal Covenant will be that a multitude is lifted up into the fellowship of Yahweh, of 'I AM', into the ever-present dimension beyond that which is eternal. The eternal realm will continue to manifest 'everlasting punishment', 'everlasting burnings', 'eternal judgement'.⁷⁸ The 'life', the 'eternal life', which we have now touched, is actually that which is 'with the Father' right at the source. This life is 'without father and mother', without 'beginning' or 'end' in any sense whatsoever. The fellowship of life into which we are raised is even beyond the beginning and end of the Eternal Covenant. This is startling, but gives us the key to understanding the difference between eternal life and everlasting judgement. These are not equal and opposite experiences. An ageless eternity of punishment will never be equal in any sense to the life of 'I AM' and the divine nature of which we are called to be partakers.⁷⁹

That which would be brought to birth through the Everlasting Covenant would necessarily be *other* than God, but could never exceed the *oneness* of God. This is the centre-point of the truth of the name. The God with a name would seek to name a creation after Himself, then manifest His name and make Himself known so as to be

76 Rev 3:14; 1:8

77 Gen 1:1

78 Matt 25:46; Isa 33:14; Heb 6:2

79 2 Pet 1:4

5. Through Eternal Spirit

apprehended. He would need to devise an entire process, express this process *vicariously* on behalf of the creation, and then make it known from within His own bosom by a divine Messenger. This One who had already comprehended beginning and end would need to travel the entire process as a forerunner, thus gaining a ‘knowledge’ by which He could ‘justify many’.⁸⁰ His pathway would take Him from a single seed, falling ‘into the ground’, to an inclusive harvest.⁸¹ In this way, the journey would become increasingly inclusive, making it possible to graft others into the process. The vicarious sanctifier would need to be joined in faith-obedience by those He sanctified.

United – grafted together

This is where the verse in Romans chapter six is such a joy: ‘united together in the likeness of His death’, where the Greek language indicates ‘growing together’ – therefore both *sown* and *grafting* are implicit in the notion of ‘united together’.

With this in the background, our first conclusion is that, in every way, the cross is a full inscription of every form of contrariness known to man; of all the contrary deeds of every man, woman and child. If this were not so, He could not be the fully adequate Saviour, Healer, Comforter and Advocate for all our iniquities, diseases, sorrows and injustices.

Tasting death – by the grace of God

We often define grace as God’s ability in us and through us, and this is apt enough as long as we also define the ability. The ability of God is seen in His capacity to amass, taste and resolve the collective experience of His creation. This capacity was demonstrated in full measure in Christ, who was ‘*full of grace and truth*’.⁸²

80 Isa 53:11

81 John 12:24

82 John 1:14

5. Through Eternal Spirit

The outcome of this deliberation is that Christ possessed the *grace* of His Father to taste the full cup through *Eternal Spirit*. If, then, we are joined to *Him* in one Spirit, and if we learn that there is everlasting consolation in Christ and eternal comfort in the Spirit, we are able to fulfil the will of God by tasting the suffering experience of others, through the one and same Spirit. 'Therefore if there is [and we know there is] any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, *fulfil* my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.'⁸³ And earlier we read, 'Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together'.⁸⁴ We are able to strive with others and strive for others. We are able to intercede in prayer, and by co-suffering become the active cross, the operation of God for reconciliation. By the same grace, sourced in the Father, that enabled the Son to taste the cumulative death of every man, we are able to reach out and taste the suffering of others. In fact, this is the very purpose for our receiving grace. We must not 'nullify the *grace* of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.'⁸⁵ In other words, we must continue to manifest His crucified-life. If we do not, we will attempt to achieve His righteousness by some other means. If we try to minister or achieve anything, other than by manifesting the crucified-life of Christ, then His effective death is nullified. So we must not 'receive the grace of God in vain', or for no visible purpose.⁸⁶ We show forth His death, in the sense of the active capacity of the cross to be effective.

The cross here and now

We do not merely observe the Lord's death from the Last Supper to His last words. We do not merely believe it or commentate upon it.

83 Phil 2:1-2 (Brackets ours)

84 Phil 1:27

85 Gal 2:21 NASU

86 2 Cor 6:1

5. Through Eternal Spirit

We are to live it, show it and display it; for we *are* it! That community where death is life, and life is death, is the visible cross. This is where the serpent is visibly lifted up – in the sense that fellow-sufferers will be numbered and scorned with the transgressors. This is where the law is visibly nailed up – in the sense of both the visible standard of righteousness and the visible curse for disobedience. This is where the bruises of the Father's disciplines are now seen. This is where the suffering that teaches obedience, and the tribulation that works patience, are seen.

Little wonder, then, that the community of believers has 'been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men' – a fragrance of death to some and life to others; an evidence of perdition to some and salvation to others.⁸⁷ Such a community acts as a living, visible, eternal divide, right here and now. The cross in their midst functions so as to arrest and destroy every serpentine deception. Likewise, all the contrary elements of law cannot survive, for they are taken and nailed to the 'tree'.⁸⁸ How is this possible? Because 'we, having died to sins', and 'having died to what we were held by' (the law), are no longer aroused by law toward sin, resulting in death.⁸⁹ Rather, we can redeem others *from* the law, so that they, like ourselves, may be *married* to the body of Christ.⁹⁰

The wisdom of the cross, manifested in a Christian community, triumphs over foolishness and pride. Legalistic objection and humiliating oppression burn themselves out upon such a people. Injustice heaped upon them only produces more offering – and more disdain for worldly gain. Why? Because now there is no humiliation or reproach that is not seen to be of Christ, mixed with Eternal Spirit into the cup, which continues to fill to its full measure.

87 1 Cor 4:9-10; 2 Cor 2:15; Phil 1:28

88 1 Pet 2:24

89 Rom 7:6

90 Rom 7:4

Suffering mixed with Eternal Spirit

Through Eternal Spirit, the 'I AM' has entered the realm of suffering, encompassed all suffering, and mixed it with Eternal Spirit so as to include it in His once for all offering. Suffering is *not*, first of all, a blessing. Suffering is linked with the curse. Therefore all suffering appears to have a punitive element. Someone or something is to blame, and we, as well as others, are suffering as a result. Suffering is *not* eternal, albeit it is a foretaste and warning of everlasting punishment and destruction.⁹¹ So suffering is not to be pursued, self-induced or retained in a morbid, resigned attitude as if suffering itself is a virtue, or an end in itself. Suffering is a doorway. The choice is given to us to turn in faith, and see each and every suffering as having been mixed in the cup of Eternal Spirit. We have the choice to mix *our* sufferings *with* Eternal Spirit, meaning that our faith gladly joins them to that covenanting operation of God which is breaking in and accomplishing the perfecting process – either redeeming or establishing everlasting punishment. It is in this sense that sufferings, for many, are merely a mark of being under judgement, and are a harbinger of their eternal judgement.

Gloriously then, a believer has the choice to lay down His life in an attitude of offering. He deserves no mercy, and except for the mercy of God alone, his judgement would be absolute and permanent. So instead of being provoked to restless manipulation of laws for survival, the believer faithfully chooses to participate in the operation of God to the degree to which he understands the significance of his contrary circumstances. In the main, he won't understand at all how his difficulties can be of use to God. However, he chooses to mix his sufferings with Eternal Spirit, and so transposes his situation, through faith, into the vibrant dialogue of the three persons, who are working in an ever-present operation to accomplish salvation. By intercessory prayer, the believer attaches himself, in the midst of infirmity, to the

91 Matt 25:46; 2 Thess 1:9

5. Through Eternal Spirit

eternal purpose of God. 'The Spirit' now 'helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'⁹² The one searching our hearts, the Son, our High Priest, 'knows what the mind of the [Holy] Spirit is', and Christ now makes 'intercession for the saints according to the will of God'.⁹³ The result of this participation is that 'all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose'.⁹⁴ Suffering linked with Eternal Spirit through faith, intercession and any subsequent actions that may be led by the Spirit, is now producing good, perhaps formation and maturity in the sufferer, and additional deliverance in others to whom the intercessory sufferings may be linked.

This is the absolute crux and high point of Christian faith. This is where we triumph. That cursed thing called suffering is turned around. If we are willing to lose life, we will find it. What appears to be death becomes the doorway to life. We have found a jewel, a pearl of great price. Life is found where there should be death. The cup which looks, in every sense, like cursing, is found to be a cup of blessing. This is the miracle of the gospel. Right where the road ends, a narrow gate opens and we rush through. The fire ahead is not avoided, but is accepted as the place of offering. Like the young Hebrew men thrown into the fire by Nebuchadnezzar, the only things burned are the 'cords of death' that bind us.⁹⁵ We *ourselves*, as it was for Christ *Himself* at Calvary, cannot be burned. Our whole reason for participating in the Christian life is expressed here. Everything leads to this. We set out, we persevere, we learn and grow, we walk in the light with one another, we maintain a single eye, we fellowship, we

92 Rom 8:26

93 Rom 8:27

94 Rom 8:28

95 Dan 3:19-25

5. Through Eternal Spirit

participate, for one reason only – that we might actually eat and drink of the substance of consolation, the glory of God in Christ.

Consolation

Corinthians says, ‘...because we *know* that as you are *partakers* of the sufferings, so also you will *partake* of the *consolation*’.⁹⁶ Partakers of the consolation! What glory this is. The words ‘participate’ and ‘partake’ both relate to the same Greek word, *koinonia* – which is also translated communion, fellowship etc. Helpfully, we find that ‘partake’ and ‘participation’, while they *are* linked with suffering and chastening, are also customarily linked with the hope, the outcome, the fruit, the substance, the glory, the consolation, the inheritance.⁹⁷ We are *partakers* of the offerings, partakers of the bread, partakers of the altar, of the Lord’s table, of the consolation, of His promise, of His grace, of the inheritance, of the heavenly calling, of Christ Himself, of the Holy Spirit, of His holiness, and of His divine nature.⁹⁸

What consolation! Consolation is the substance and reality added to the Everlasting Covenant by the Father, the ‘God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Father of mercies* and God of *all comfort*, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.’⁹⁹ The Father Himself is the source and fountain of merciful and everlasting consolation. As we participate in suffering, we partake of ‘*good hope by grace*’.¹⁰⁰ By the grace capacity of Eternal Spirit, we are enabled to ‘taste death’ and enter into a fellowship with others, in the cross, where the actual substance of hope is being brought to birth as an eternal reality.

96 2 Cor 1:7

97 2 Cor 1:7; Heb 12:8

98 1 Cor 9:13; 10:17; 1 Cor 10:18,21; 2 Cor 1:7; Eph 3:6; Phil 1:7; Col 1:12; Heb 3:1; 3:14; 6:4; 12:10; 2 Peter 1:4

99 2 Cor 1:3-5

100 2 Thess 2:16

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Consolation is the supernatural ability of the 'Father of mercies' that enables us to enter into the suffering of others and fellowship with them in *their* suffering, through the comfort that comes from God. Consolation enables endurance, for we 'put on tender mercies, kindness ...'.¹⁰¹ Consolation is the substance of the hope, drawn back into the here and now, through faith. We can endure as if we already possess 'good hope'. Consolation touches us with His own pure realm of reward, or pure light, something a natural man cannot understand or approach. For here is a dimension that is unutterable, beyond law, a glory that exists apart from law. For what man is there who finds reason or purpose in suffering, except the one for whom it is a doorway into glory. Where there is assessment, comparison, frustration, fury, anger, regret, loud protest or even sullen resignation, there is only an *exercise of law* in the hands of a self-centred sinner. Alternatively, a faithful believer can choose to lose his life, but can suffer no loss at all. He will possess either the miracle of deliverance, or the miracle of consolation. Either way, his joy will be full.

6. The death of sin – death to sin

Let us now discuss the way in which we put sin to death, and literally die to sin, from day to day. These two aspects interrelate but are not the same. Christ is said to have ‘died to sin’, extending this capacity to us, whereupon we are able to reckon ourselves dead indeed to sin. But in the process of dying to sin, Christ also put sin to death. He destroyed the body of sin, and this operation is also to be active in us as we participate in His cross. That I may die to sin and live to God offers untold consolation. But that I may also *put sin to death*, enlivens that dimension of the cross in which I may find victory, then minister victory to the lives of others!

Christ became a curse

‘Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having *become a curse* for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in

6. The death of sin – death to sin

Christ Jesus.¹⁰² Arguably, the most difficult aspect of Christ's work to understand is that in which 'He *made* Him who knew no sin to *be sin for us*, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'.¹⁰³ How did the holy one of God become sin to the degree that He was represented as the 'serpent' on the 'pole'?¹⁰⁴ How was He associated with the curse of mankind's fall and devoted to destruction, as much as any transgressor at any time? How did He accomplish this 'yet without sin', and what does this great Christological mystery mean to us?¹⁰⁵ Once again, if our mindset is fixed in a 'substitutional' view, then this marvel is merely one more reason to believe, wonder and worship. If, however, we have grasped the call to 'go to Him outside the camp', to partake of the altar, to participate in the cross, in all its aspects, the marvel comes alive. We may go to Him and see to it that the body of sin, in all its active aspects, is burned outside the camp.¹⁰⁶

Devoted to destruction – devoted to God

The key to this matter, as we said earlier, lies in the background to the word 'curse'. Paul is building his argument on the Hebrew word *cherem*, meaning devoted,¹⁰⁷ whether devoted to the Lord, or dedicated to destruction. One could not touch something that was devoted to destruction (accursed, *cherem*), as Achan did, without being put to death. Equally, something that was devoted (*cherem*) as 'most holy unto the LORD', could not be sold.¹⁰⁸ Such a devoted thing was everlastingly redeemed, in a sense.

102 Gal 3:13-14

103 2 Cor 5:21

104 Num 21:9; John 3:14

105 Heb 4:15

106 Heb 13:11-13

107 Gal 3:13,14 Note that in Deut 21:23, which Paul quotes in Galatians, the Heb. *cherem* occurs. It is compelling that Paul is alluding to the background understanding of *cherem*, in that he is discussing the curse of the law, not merely the curse of crucifixion. Theological commentary is divided on whether Christ was a curse merely as one crucified, or accursed as one devoted to destruction.

108 Lev 27:28-29

6. The death of sin – death to sin

So, in one scenario, one was doomed if he touched what was devoted to God. In another case, one was seen as devoted and untouchable if he rejected the accursed things. The strength of *cherem* is clear when we read, 'No person under the ban [*cherem*], who may become doomed to destruction [*cheram*, derived from *cherem*] among men, shall be *redeemed*, but shall *surely be put to death*'.¹⁰⁹ In addition, it was forbidden to touch anything that was accursed. 'Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be *doomed* [*cherem*] *to destruction like it* [ie, like the abomination you have touched]. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.'¹¹⁰

In this word lies the precise explanation as to how Christ touched the curse (*cherem*), while remaining blameless and devoted (*cherem*) to the LORD. Quite simply, Christ did touch the sin that was accursed and devoted to destruction. At the same time, He remained holy, devoted, to the Lord.

Christ's glorious redemption operated as a bridge between these two. While remaining holy to God, He reached out and touched that which was accursed. And we must also say that while bearing the curse of eternal death, He reached out in blameless worship to the Father. As nearly as we can understand God in Christ, reconciling, we might draw upon the language of Abraham's sacrifice, and say that the fiery jealousy of God passed between the pieces of the offering. 'There appeared a *smoking oven* and a *burning torch* that passed between those pieces.'¹¹¹ Two things occurred at once. He was consumed as a sin offering outside the camp, while also examined as a spotless offering to God. On the one hand, *sin was put to death*; on the other, *He died to sin*. Both of these were achieved in the one action.

109 Lev 27:29

110 Deut 7:26

111 Gen 15:17

6. *The death of sin – death to sin*

Christ became a curse

Christ was not only cursed, but *became* a curse – the full receptacle of the power of law to ban sin. The demand of the law was fully expressed, and by Christ's voluntary acceptance of the appointed penalty of law, the curse was exhausted. By touching the doom of sin, He was condemned *as* sin. He was marked as *cherem*, as devoted to destruction. However, because the law cannot curse what is just, Christ was able to make a separation between Himself and the body of sin. Thus He was able to condemn sin in the flesh. He liberated law from its bondage to sin. (Remember, the law itself is not sin; however law, in the hands of sin, brings death). What Christ did was to separate the law from its covenant to flesh, a covenant that had demanded circumcision for entrance. Now Christ was literally circumcised *out of* the covenant between law and flesh. He redeemed flesh from the law. Moreover, He was able to nail law back into its rightful place in the harmony of life and law. Where formerly the law had stood in our way, He took it 'out of the way', as no longer standing as an obstacle.¹¹²

Christ and the law

Christ performed three actions in relation to law: He received its curse as a penalty, He fulfilled its standard of righteousness and He circumcised Himself free from it. He stood free of it by relating in absolute faith toward the Father. It was the old law judging Him, not the Father. The Father's participation was something quite different. He was 'pleased' to 'bruise' Christ, in the aspect of discipline by which Christ 'learned obedience' and gained the full 'knowledge' of our pathway to salvation.¹¹³ In this regard, Christ fully trusted and cried out to His Father outside the realm of law, of creation. The simplest conclusion remains true. He overcame sin by laying His own life down

112 Col 2:14

113 Isa 53:10-11; Heb 5:8

6. *The death of sin – death to sin*

as an offering. No one took His life from Him, nor did He preserve His own life in any sense. He remained faithful to the Father within the dimension of Their own relationship, outside the machinery of law – beyond the body of sin.

The gloom of death, the shadow of law and its curse, did pass between Father and Son. As the embodiment of the curse, there had to be a sense in which He was ‘forsaken’ (Heb. loosed¹¹⁴). It is essential that within His holy operation we should find Him enduring an eternity of separation. He did eternally suffer the punishment of being the accursed one. ‘The sorrows of Sheol’ and the ‘snares of death’ surrounded Him.¹¹⁵ In just a few hours within our human dimension, He endured the full extent of eternal punishment, in the eternal dimension. By suffering this eternal punishment as the accursed one, sin itself was now *cherem*, for ever. For as much as it lay within the capacity of Eternal Spirit to embrace sin, now the element of wrath within Eternal Spirit was also fully expressed. Now the point came where His experience of everlasting wrath was ‘finished’. In the eternal realm, the realm of the Everlasting Covenant, it would never be finished, but would burn for ever and ever. But as He passed through the heavens, the heavens of the covenant temple, He left behind Him a lake of eternal, fiery wrath for all who would not enter the justifying operation of Calvary. With the law removed, the law itself was no longer perpetuating the curse. Neither could the law be a schoolmaster, offering a mitigating protection *from* eternal curse.

Once man’s interplay with law was ended, there remained only the jealous wrath of God Himself with which to interact. The Father was not standing over against the Son, as if rejecting Him. Rather, the Father joined the Son in the accursed dimension of Calvary. Together

114 It may be that the interpretation ‘loosed’ is more accurate, since the actions undertaken to respond to the curse of law were by the intrinsic Son, not acting independently, but rather acting within the embrace of the indestructible relationship of the Three, who in the capacity of Eternal Spirit demonstrated the capacity of jealous love in establishing both everlasting life and everlasting destruction.

115 Psa 18:5

6. *The death of sin – death to sin*

they dealt with the doom of sin. Together they reconciled us, not imputing our trespasses any further.¹¹⁶ Why? Because the whole of the ‘old’ – the ‘old things’ – were now passed away.¹¹⁷ All things were now made new. God in Christ circumcised the whole of the ‘old’ operation, the flesh subject to law, sin and death. What was left behind was an eternal fire, established in His own flesh, from which His flesh was raised. We ourselves were included and reconciled in the body of His flesh, and transferred all the way ‘through death’.¹¹⁸

Sin put to death

So, in the one action, Christ put sin to death and died to it. The fire of jealous holiness *consumed that sin to which He was dying*, thus igniting a lake of fire that would punish sin for ever and ever. In the fire of Their perpetual offering, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit embraced sin, once for all, and ignited everlasting punishment, which, though it burned on for a countless age of ages, would never, and could never, be equal to the salvation now established. The shadow of doom passed across the face of the sun, between Christ and the Father. He could rightly cry, now not for Himself but, as the last great cry within the frame of time, on mankind’s behalf, ‘Why have You forsaken Me?’.

Now he could cry, ‘It is finished’. He had endured the eternal dimensions of punishment and exclusion. For Him it was finished, even though eternity itself would never cease to burn with indignation. How was this possible? Because when He stood up and met the Father, with the cry ‘It is finished’, He was arising within the immanent relationship of Yahweh – ‘I AM’ – in that fellowship which is before and beyond everlasting – the fellowship from which the Everlasting Covenant was itself conceived. This is crucial. Christ not only left time behind, but eternity as well. John is clear about this. What we now touch as ‘eternal life’ is that life which was ‘with the

116 2 Cor 5:19

117 2 Cor 5:17

118 Col 1:21,22

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Father’, which, when apprehended, places us in the ‘fellowship that is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ’.¹¹⁹

7. Ransom by blood

Now the meaning of His ‘ransom’, His ‘redemption’, comes alive to us.¹²⁰ ‘*Through His own blood* He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal *redemption*.’¹²¹ Christ bought back and brought back that which was accursed. He did this by His own blood. This is obviously a power inherent in the blood. Now we must confront the least understood precept of the Christian faith. What is the message of the blood? ‘According to the Law ... all things are *purged with blood*, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.’¹²² Millions of litres of animal blood were shed to amplify one lesson. The meaning of blood was that it was poured out until one was dead. Life was given up. Once again, it was not just substitution at work. It was *life* being transferred to another. Life! ‘For the *life of the flesh* is in the

120 1 Tim 2:6

121 Heb 9:12

122 Heb 9:22 NASU

7. Ransom by blood

blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls.¹²³

We read that unless death takes place, there is no remission. The truth is this. Unless death takes place, no life can be transferred. The message of blood is that His own essential life is delivered to our flesh – and this is how He ransoms us.

Looking at the legal interpretation for a moment, it could be asked, ‘Did Christ shed His blood as the cost of ransom, because the law demanded death for sin?’ Was Christ merely an innocent scapegoat, rather like all the other animals? Did He purchase us, redeem us, simply by shedding a more precious blood than that of bulls and goats? Indeed not. The shedding of blood was to do with the life of God, the very power of eternal life, being made available. Without this life in us, there is no remission.

‘How much *more* shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?’¹²⁴ His is the blood of a spotless offering. His is the blood of a holy life which, when active in the recipient, will bring him back from the curse, by actually purging his sin and remitting it completely. We must not think that His blood was merely shed to satisfy law. If this were true, then the blood has done its work and has no further power. He has not merely paid some supreme price, such that no captor may ever again ask for ransom. He has ransomed us by granting us such genuine deliverance that we need never again be brought into bondage to the dictates of law. Sin is *in the flesh*.¹²⁵ There is no condemnation cast upon the weakness of our flesh, for now in our weak flesh there operates a life that overcomes sin and fulfills the standards of righteousness.

This is how he turned curse into blessing – by blood. Now if and when His shed blood is partaken of, it can truly redeem! Where and

123 Lev 17:11

124 Heb 9:14

125 Rom 8:3

7. Ransom by blood

how do we partake of this blood? In one way only – by drinking the cup. How is His life received, since we don't receive a blood transfusion, and God doesn't mysteriously sprinkle us inwardly? Yes, the blood was sprinkled in the Old Covenant. It was sprinkled seven times on the mercy seat to show one thing – to show that the blood spilt upon Christ as *the* Mercy Seat, was capable of offering complete remission. It was also sprinkled on the tabernacle furniture and vessels. Why? To verify the lesson that the application of blood enables living, effective *participation* in temple service. But how does the blood become active? It is only by the blood being drunk as a cup, the cup of blessing. 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.'¹²⁶ There is no practical way to benefit from blood at all, other than by sharing in the cup of blessing. Paul's words are clear. 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?'¹²⁷ It's definite. How do we share in the blood of Christ? How do we come to participate in its real power to redeem us, purge sin, cleanse the conscience and perfect us in holiness? It is only by *sharing in the cup*. The cup is the active and vibrant power of the cross, able to include us at the point of curse and translate us the full length of the new and living way, across the entire gap from cursing to blessing. So we embrace the perfecting process from day to day. We rejoice to partake in His sufferings, to show forth His dying and His living in very practical ways.¹²⁸

Partaking

Perhaps now we are beginning to see that while ever we are trifling with typological comparisons and legal satisfaction theories, and perhaps going a little further to dabble with thoughts of participation in the power of the cross, we are still missing the major point. There is no stronger declaration of the cross, and of our response, than the offer

126 John 6:53

127 1 Cor 10:16

128 1 Pet 4:13

7. Ransom by blood

to eat His flesh and drink His blood. We are to be partakers. We are to partake – to take part, by eating and drinking. It's the impact of the words 'eating' and 'drinking' that carry us from the thought of *participating* to the power of *partaking*. Let's think of it this way. *Participating* in suffering, by definition, is only temporal, for our suffering is only 'momentary, light affliction'.¹²⁹ But we partake of an *eternal weight* of glory.¹³⁰ As we said earlier, partaking links with the hope, the consolation, the substance. We partake of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of the divine nature.¹³¹ We participate in the process, but we partake of the eternal substance. As we have noted, partaking and participation are related to the same word – *koinonia*, the word for communion, or fellowship. But the strength of 'eating' and 'drinking' the flesh and blood of His mortality, so that we show that life that was within His mortality, must not be missed. The bread is His *broken* flesh, rent upon the cross. The cup is not just His blood, but His *shed* blood. Corinthians and Hebrews both make the point in the strongest possible terms. We are to be partakers of the altar. Those of the old covenant, whatever was their genuine experience in their day, clearly had no opportunity to partake of the altar in the way now possible through Christ.

We must try to come to terms with what it means to partake by actually eating, and by drinking. In popular terms we say, 'We are what we eat'. We can only humbly conclude that there is to be a revelation of Christ in our flesh, something that *lifts us above casual participating*, into 'being' – *being* the very body of Christ, to the extent that sufferings experienced in *these* weak and broken bodies, and the life that is poured out in these earthen vessels, are visibly showing *His dying*, and *His living*.

We find there is something astonishing here, as we dwell upon it.

129 2 Cor 4:17 NASU

130 2 Cor 4:17

131 Heb 3:14; 6:4; 2 Peter 1:4

Go forth to Him

Clearly, our sense of partnership in the cross has simply not been strong enough. It's not hard to see how it would be to Satan's advantage to preoccupy the Christian church with substitutionism, and with the kind of worshipful adoration – mystical on one hand, and sensual on the other – that beatifies Christ, and ourselves together with Him. What then should we do with the Scripture that bids us to go to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach? 'Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach ... by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.'¹³² True praise upon our lips is because we have joined Him outside the camp, where He is covered with reproach with His bones exposed, receiving gall for food and vinegar for drink, where our sin is being burned and consumed with 'everlasting burnings'.¹³³ Upon sharing in His reproach, and seeing the body of sin burning in jealous fire, we would joyfully return as those whose sin is put to death and who are dead to sin. Indeed we return with thanksgiving. Worshippers of old could never eat of this altar. Christ is both our sacrifice and our altar. We partake of Him. We eat His very flesh, and drink His blood. Our praise is because we have witnessed the death of sin, and we are dead to sin. The fruit of our partaking is upon our lips. We have eaten His flesh outside the camp, at a table prepared in the midst of our enemies.

Those committed to the law covenant had no way of eating His flesh while ever that first worship venue was still standing. 'He takes away the first that He may establish the second.'¹³⁴ Taking this as a symbolic lesson, we recognise that we must be converted and destroy the 'old', the first mode of our existence, the body of sin and death. This 'body is dead because of sin'.¹³⁵ And now we are partaking of the

132 Heb 13:13-15

133 Isa 33:14

134 Heb 10:9

135 Rom 8:10

7. Ransom by blood

substance of another body – the body of Christ. We are up-building our very substance by partaking of the bread of this altar.

Building again what we destroyed

Let us read carefully. ‘But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a *minister of sin*? Certainly not! For if *I build again* those things which *I destroyed*, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.’¹³⁶

This reading, containing one of the most notable texts in the Christian faith, follows an incident in which Peter, among others, had to be ‘withstood’ for permitting precepts of the former Jewish faith to be introduced. Coming quickly to our point, Paul refers to a poignant situation in which Peter is implicated when he says, ‘If I build again ... which I destroyed ...’ and thus teaches several things. Most importantly, we ourselves *are able to destroy* the works of sinful flesh, and we ourselves may build them again if we don’t take care.

Destroying the body of sin

It is the destroying of the body of sin, so that we are delivered from the body of death, able now to be the body of Christ, that should occupy our meditations upon the cross more than anything else. ‘Our old man is crucified with him, that the *body of sin* might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.’¹³⁷ ‘Who will deliver me from this *body of death*?’¹³⁸ ‘Therefore, my brethren, you also have become *dead*

136 Gal 2:17-21

137 Rom 6:6-7 KJV

138 Rom 7:24

7. Ransom by blood

to the law through the *body of Christ*, that you may be married to another.¹³⁹

Briefly, Paul teaches us about the law of sin and death, and highlights three elements to which we must become dead, so to speak – law, sin and death. He instructs us extensively about the interplay between these three elements – a vast study that is beyond our present limits. Suffice to say that by dying with Christ, we are said to be dead to the law, dead to sin and delivered from death itself as well. Even death is ‘abolished’ in the cross.

It is crucial to our gospel understanding to know how to deal with the body of sin. Why? Because if Christ is to be manifested in our flesh, amidst the members of His body, the body of sin must be destroyed. And our earlier meditation on Christ’s work shows us how this was accomplished. Christ has established ‘everlasting destruction’ as a principle: ‘... those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord¹⁴⁰ and ‘... the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is *destruction*’.¹⁴¹

‘The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”’.¹⁴²

‘Those who desire to be rich fall into ... harmful lusts which drown men in *destruction and perdition*’.¹⁴³

Indeed Christ has ignited the lake of fire, where the ‘worm’, the corruption of sin, never dies.¹⁴⁴ It is only here and now that we may remove those things that offend from our lives. The body of sin may be destroyed. The glorious conclusion is that we *can* ‘put to death the

139 Rom 7:4

140 2 Thess 1:8-9

141 Phil 3:18-19

142 Isa 33:14

143 1 Tim 6:9

144 Mark 9:44

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deeds of the body'.¹⁴⁵ We ourselves can *destroy* the entire 'body' of the old, and not build it again.¹⁴⁶ This is the power of the cross that we must eagerly pursue as believers and as ministers of the gospel. If righteousness, right outcomes, good results, happy lives and blessed relationships can be produced simply by building up and conforming ourselves to legal principles, then the grace supplied through Eternal Spirit to silence sin is 'set aside', and 'Christ is dead in vain'.¹⁴⁷

145 Rom 8:13

146 Gal 2:18

147 Gal 2:21

8. Condemning sin in the flesh

We recall the famous words of Job, ‘And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that *in my flesh* I shall see God’.¹⁴⁸ To rejoice in the implications of our study, we must overview the history of our ‘flesh’, from creation to new creation, to magnify the mystery of His life manifested in our flesh. To begin, we should make a thoughtful reading of Romans chapter eight, noting the references to what He has accomplished in relation to our flesh.

‘There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to *the flesh*, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from *the law of sin and death*. For what the law could not do in that it was weak *through the flesh*, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of *sinful flesh*, on account of sin: He *condemned sin in the flesh*, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to *the flesh* but according to the Spirit. For those

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who live according to *the flesh* set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in *the flesh* cannot please God. But you are *not in the flesh* but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the *body is dead* because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also *give life to your mortal bodies* through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – *not to the flesh*, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you *put to death the deeds of the body*, you will live.¹⁴⁹

The story of ‘flesh’

Briefly, we know that God created flesh and inbreathed flesh; then to sinful flesh He sent His Son to condemn sin in the flesh. Now He has joined our flesh to His body, reconciled us through death and manifested His life in our flesh. We now put off the fleshly way of living by law. The outward man is perishing, but through our eating His flesh and drinking His blood, a house from heaven is being developed which will clothe the inward man in the resurrection. Indeed, in our flesh, we will see God. Let us now expand this sketch.

Creation

The material form of man was made from the dust and called ‘flesh’. Into this flesh, God breathed the ‘breath of lives’¹⁵⁰ and made man a

149 Rom 8:1-3

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living soul (Gr. *psuche*¹⁵¹). In these two statements, ‘breath of lives’ and ‘living soul’, we find reference to the aspects of community and individual identity. We understand that this inbreathing from God gave man *bios* functions in common with creation (Gr. *bios*, life¹⁵²), but that this breath was unique, since all other beings were *spoken* into being, not inbreathed. This would explain man’s uniquely ‘spiritual’ and godlike capacity, something not found in other creatures.

Nevertheless, mankind in his first creation is called ‘natural’ – ‘the *spiritual* is *not first*, but the *natural*, and afterward the *spiritual*.’¹⁵³ We learn that there were to be steps in mankind’s ultimate ‘image’. ‘As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall *also bear the image* of the heavenly Man.’¹⁵⁴ The natural man was to become spiritual by inheriting the image of the Man of heaven. All this was quite apart from the Fall, which would introduce other elements altogether. For example, because the natural man is now fallen, he is unable to ‘receive the things of the Spirit of God’.¹⁵⁵

From the beginning, even before ‘new birth’, mankind possessed individual identity. Man was predestined to share the incorruptible *zoe* of God, but this was only possible through adoption into the Son. Individual *psuche* was to overcome corruption and be transformed to the giving capacity inherent in the Father’s *zoe*. For the capacity of self-giving and the capacity to reveal another to be expressed, individual *psuche* had to be laid down, as when Jesus said, ‘I lay down My life [*psuche*] that I may take it again’.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, John says that ‘we also ought to lay down our lives [Gr. *psuche*] for the brethren’.¹⁵⁷

150 ‘And (the Lord God) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Literally, the breath of lives.’ The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. ©2001

151 cf 1 Cor 15:45

152 1 John 2:16

153 1 Cor 15:46

154 1 Cor 15:49

155 1 Cor 2:14

156 John 10:17

157 1 John 3:16

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It was Christ's purpose to 'zoe-fy' each living soul (*psuche*). Whereas the first Adam was a 'living soul', the last Adam, Christ, is a life-giving (*zoopoico*) Spirit.¹⁵⁸ The enlivened *psuche* is the real 'you', the eternal 'you'. Paul refers to the 'inward man' that is being 'renewed day by day'.¹⁵⁹ We learn that once Christ comes, this inward man must be nourished with the bread of heaven – His flesh and His blood.

The Fall

In the next stage of the story of 'flesh', in the Fall, we know that sin became operative *in* the flesh. In Romans, Paul clarifies two notable things. He explains how sin operates in the flesh and declares that Christ's work was to condemn sin in the flesh (Gr. *sarx*). In the midst of these discussions, he points out that the believer who relates to law is called fleshly (Gr *sarkikos*). With the Fall, various laws have been activated, and the sum of the whole operation is simply referred to as 'the body of sin'. The law of sin is now operative in the flesh – taking hold of God's holy law and using it to bring forth death. The body of sin continues in a wretched mode until it becomes the 'body of death' from which one cries to be delivered.¹⁶⁰ A later chapter is devoted to this discussion.

The gospel

The good news is that Christ now condemns sin in the flesh, making way for the flesh to be joined to the Lord in one Spirit, and to belong to God as His temple. 'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him ... for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God *in your body* and in your spirit, which are God's.'¹⁶¹

Having condemned sin in the flesh, it becomes essential for us to understand how the law of sin and death is superseded by the law of

158 1 Cor 14:45

159 2 Cor 4:16

160 Rom 7:24

161 1 Cor 6:17-20

8. Condemning sin in the flesh

the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This is our most important pursuit as Christians. We soon discover that in Christ we have died to the law, that we may reckon ourselves dead to sin and that death itself has been abolished.

The essential 'you' and 'me' can now either live 'in the flesh' – as Paul says, 'When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members' – or we can 'serve in the newness of the Spirit'.¹⁶²

We learn that sin can be in the flesh, 'you' can be 'in the flesh' – but equally the life of God (*zoe*) can be in the flesh. When Paul says that there is nothing good in our flesh, he is referring to the fact that there is no capacity, by relating to law, to produce righteous outcomes.

His *zoe* in our weak flesh

My body as a Christian, is now defined by the rule, 'To whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?'¹⁶³ My body, my flesh, is either the body obedient to sin, or my body is obedient to righteousness.

Zoe life is within me, albeit in weakness. Even in creation the body was one of limitation.¹⁶⁴ Even before sin, it was earthy and corruptible, operating by blood-life. Then once we receive His life, even then, as for Christ, we each begin as a 'tender plant'.¹⁶⁵ Added to this, the body itself is perishing and in a state of weakness. Doubtless, 'the body is dead because of sin'.¹⁶⁶

162 Rom 7:5-6

163 Rom 6:16

164 Phil 3:21 – 'will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body'. Lowly (*tapeinosis*) means 'of low estate', and is not necessarily referring to our sin-stricken condition. 1 Cor 15:45-48 makes it clear that 'dust' was always intended to inherit the heavenly image. NKJV

165 Isa 53:2

166 Rom 8:10

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Our present condition then is that *psuche*, enlivened by *zoe*, is being revived, renewed, regenerated. The inward man is being renewed, more and more, despite the outward man perishing. *Zoe*, sourced in the Father, shared with us in the Son, is growing by the Holy Spirit. Christ is in me, and I am in Christ. Neither is true on its own, and neither can be denied. 'I am crucified with Christ, *nevertheless I live*, but the life I now live in the flesh ...', we read in Galatians.¹⁶⁷

The Holy Spirit provides the sanctifying, empowering link between Christ and my own unique *psuche*. While He firmly walks the line of presumption, He also graciously empowers me to be *me*, in Christ, as one born of the Father. The Holy Spirit gives life to my mortal body.¹⁶⁸ There is a life that I now live in the flesh. It's mine, and I'm accountable for it, but it's also His. I may not confuse 'me' with 'Him'. Certainly His life is in the flesh, but that flesh is also in the corporate Christ. I am a member of His body, 'of His flesh and of his bones'.¹⁶⁹

So the body does matter. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are told to 'present our members', our bodies, 'as a living sacrifice' because the will of God can only be accomplished in bodies of flesh.¹⁷⁰ In the resurrection, we will not be without bodies, as if we are 'naked'. Rather, we will be clothed upon with that substantial house from heaven, one which is being formed at this very moment. All biological life has an end-point, including our mortal bodies. Flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom. But we shall have a resurrection body like His glorious body, one which can eat without needing to and can exceed the limits of time and space. We shall not take on some kind of angelic form. If this were the case, there would no need to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

167 Gal 2:20

168 Rom 8:11

169 Eph 5:30

170 2 Cor 5:3

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Putting to death the deeds of the body

‘If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.’¹⁷¹ It is most essential then that we deal with sin, here and now, while we are in this mortal body. As this is the only phase in which we may eat His flesh, so also it is our only opportunity to deal with sin in the flesh. How do we put sin to death in the flesh?

Our answer is that ‘the word of the cross’ carries in its embrace that very same operation of God as expressed, once for all, at Calvary.¹⁷² As the word of the cross is ministered to us, it voices several things. First, it convicts us that the contrary condition we are presently experiencing is itself inscribed in the cross – since the cross, once for all, is a total statement of the condition of man. Christ has died *for* sin, and *because of* sin.

There are two sides to this first conviction. Some, in a desperate condition, may indeed be *glad* to find that their miseries *are* comprehended in His one death. On the other side, many of us are *not all that convinced* that we *are* dead – ‘dead in trespasses and sins’.¹⁷³ We are not convinced that the death we are looking at is ours – when it is my death; and your death. We would be happy for it to be *His* death – something that He chose to do, to which we can remain casually indifferent. In truth, many are not at all compelled by His once for all death, and don’t mind enduring a few personal trials provided they can ignore the cross. Alternatively, when the level of suffering is excessive, they choose to blame God. In both cases such ones ignore the fact that their trials *are* comprehended in His once for all death, and that they are in fact a foretaste of eternal death. This is quite challenging to our basic attitude in approaching the cross. Do we come to Christ looking for life – and only slowly admit that what we are looking at is indeed *our* death, our eternal death? We cannot find life until we acknowledge that our death is His, and until His death becomes ours.

171 Rom 8:13

172 1 Cor 1:18 NASU

173 Eph 2:1

8. Condemning sin in the flesh

The second point about the word of the cross is that it reveals to us the eternal consequence of these deeds. We now cry out to be able to die to sin. Thirdly, the word makes known the chastisement that fell upon Him *for* every contrary deed. Finally, as we watch further, we see *His* death to sin. We catch sight of Him as the Lamb, as One infinitely separate from all the sin which He carried as the embodiment of the ‘serpent’. He was separate because He remained blameless, with clean hands.¹⁷⁴ He laid His own life down. No one took it from Him. He overcame sin through offering. For as much as *He* died to sin, we become convinced, as Romans chapter six instructs us, that *we* can *likewise* reckon ourselves dead indeed to sin. In the spirit of faith, we believe and speak.¹⁷⁵ We are moved to confess that the contrariness we are seeing in ourselves is in fact visible in His once for all death. His dying is my dying. He has been ‘made sin’ for us.¹⁷⁶ My dying is now visible as part of *His* dying. My condition is included. He is dying *my* death. He is gathering all the emotions, passions, desires, reactions, counter-reactions, justifications and condemnations – the body of sin – and He is judging these as part of the curse. He is putting my sin to death as part of the curse. As I am ‘salted with fire’ and join Him in the fire of offering – that burning which also belongs to the eternal lake of fire – I am able to put sin to death.¹⁷⁷

Through the Spirit – putting sin to death

Let us dwell further on what is perhaps the high point of everything we are saying. It is in the fire of offering that we are able to put our sinful deeds to death.

‘If *by the Spirit* you *put to death* the deeds of the body, you will live.’¹⁷⁸ What would the Christian church hope to bring to a sin-stricken world? Simply, the death of sin; the ability to put sin to death – the

174 Psa 18:20

175 2 Cor 4:13

176 2 Cor 5:21

177 Mark 9:49 NASU

178 Rom 8:13

8. Condemning sin in the flesh

deeds of the body of sin. The gospel brings change. What a thirst there is for a message of such substance as this! And what a famine for the hearing of such good news. What does 'by the Spirit' mean? Here lies the missing key. Perhaps 'through the Spirit' is better – just to lift our eyes above the vain mechanics of praying, believing and hoping that the Holy Spirit will do something. We put sin to death 'through the Spirit' by entering the operation of Eternal Spirit, that operation of the cross that we have been describing. This is why we are united in the likeness of His death through baptism: so that sin will not reign over all. Death has no more dominion.¹⁷⁹

How do we put sin to death? We do so by joining ourselves to the likeness of His death, His death to sin. We grasp all the taunts, temptations and condemnations mounting against us, or within us. We assemble and confess all the deeds of self-justification which have become clear to us by the conviction of the Spirit. And now we approach His face of light, the glorious presence of His holy fire. In the operation of Their Everlasting Covenant, through Eternal Spirit, the three persons have interfaced with mankind and established a mercy seat to which we may come, boldly. By His own intercessory operation, God is gathering in everything that offends, and is destroying it in the fire of righteous judgement. As we join Him in the fire of offering, expressing love and holiness, nothing can survive except that which is born of God. Like the Hebrews in the fire, the cords burn and the righteous live. We become identified in His presence by name, as existing apart from the sin that seeks to define us. The sin that dwells in me is 'no longer I'.¹⁸⁰ I confess the life of Christ within me. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless *I live!*

Death to sin

The crunch-point, as I perceive further, is that His *own* death, once I see this as separate from His dying *my* death, is something quite

179 Rom 6:9,12,14

180 Rom 7:17

8. Condemning sin in the flesh

different. His own death, in summary, is to be seen as a death *to* sin. This is something more than *my death being laid upon Him*. There is a death that *He* dies, and I am united – sown, grafted and growing (mixing the symbols) – in the likeness of His death. His death is not a writhing struggle under the accumulation of man’s sin. His *own* death, as an *inherent quality of His intrinsic life*, demonstrates something quite different. His is not the death *of* or *for* sin. His is the death *to* sin. Now the nature of Christ’s own intrinsic life is being demonstrated – a life that can die an absolute death, but triumph over it.

And now I observe an amazing transposition. His death is transposed so as to be active in me. As a result, I can reckon myself dead indeed to sin. In full accountability, then, I unashamedly confess all the ‘motions of sins’ activated within my flesh.¹⁸¹ These have become visible to me because the fellowship context in which I live is bringing them to the surface for removal. In repentance, I acknowledge that these are within me – these desires are in my flesh. But then, in wonder, I observe that they are visible in His cross, where He died to sin. *I identify with His indifference to all activity that is aroused and empowered by law*. So then I reckon myself dead indeed to sin in the faith of the operation of God, delivered to me by the word of the cross. I reckon with the same authority as Christ. I am dead indeed to sin. The sin that dwells in me cannot overwhelm me so as to be the definition of who I am. I may now reckon myself alive unto God, through Christ. Why? Because the capacity to die to sin is inherent in that unique life of the Son which I now live. I am co-crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live.¹⁸² I am alive to God because Christ lives, not me. There is a change here, an enormous change. It is not I who live, but Christ.

181 Rom 7:5 KJV

182 Gal 2:20

Baptism – reckoning – presenting

According to Romans chapter six, following baptism and reckoning, there is just one further step. I must simply ‘present’ my ‘members’ as ‘instruments’ of the righteous life of Christ.¹⁸³ My members – mind, will, emotions – must now be yielded entirely to the motivation of Christ’s righteous life.

In the book of Galatians, Paul adds clarity to this proposition. Christ loved and gave Himself for me.¹⁸⁴ He did die for me. But more than this, I died with Him. There are two deaths here. He died; and I died. I am co-crucified with Him.

Not I but Christ

‘I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives 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.’¹⁸⁵

As we read earlier from 2 Corinthians, ‘We judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died’.¹⁸⁶ This verse continues, henceforth we do not live for ourselves, but for Him. To this verse we should add one from Colossians, ‘For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God’.¹⁸⁷

The message is clear. The impact is considerable. If the Christian proposition is ever to be understood at all, it must surely depend on apprehending these few verses. I’m living, and yet it’s not me who is living. It’s Christ. I’m dying, but it’s not me who’s dying. Every day, it’s Him and not me. The life I am living is His. Do we believe this? Perhaps we believe it when we seem to be prospering. But when we are ‘bearing in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus’ we are prone to forget

183 Rom 6:13

184 Gal 2:20

185 Gal 2:20

186 2 Cor 5:14

187 Col 3:3

8. Condemning sin in the flesh

the gospel proposition altogether.¹⁸⁸ Immediately, something is wrong – or so we think. We feel we have lost our way.

Bearing in our body

Now many of Paul's admonitions can be understood. He hoped to urge the believers to *be the body of Christ* – by bearing in their bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that His dying-life, His resurrection life, might be manifested also. The matter is all about the *body*. Does the body serve righteousness; or sin aroused by law? Paul spoke often about carnality, about returning to the tenets of the law which only revived sin and led to death. The believers were to be the body of Christ, not reverting to the body of sin and, further, to the body of death. We begin to understand, then, why his treatise on Christ's inclusive death to sin in Romans chapter six is followed by the warning in chapter seven concerning the law of sin and death. Paul taught that law arouses sin and brings death. If we are to be dead to sin, he contends, we must understand how the law revives sin and leads to death. Sin is aroused by law.

The body of sin

The subject of the body of sin becomes important here. The body of sin is distinguished from the 'old man' in Romans chapter six. The old man – the entire state of corporate humanity in which we once lived our lives in the flesh – is crucified. The old man is *me*, in *kinship* with the world and its rudimentary principles. This old man is crucified. We don't reckon the old man dead. We reckon *ourselves* dead to sin. There is a big difference. Our present problem is not with the old man, but with the body of sin. Paul says that the old man is crucified *so that* the body of sin can be destroyed. So what is the body of sin? And how is the body of sin destroyed?

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First of all, note carefully that the body *does not of itself belong to sin*, for it may just as well belong to the Lord.¹⁸⁹ The body of sin denotes that mode by which the body belongs to, or is ruled by, the power of sin, in which the members are instruments of unrighteousness. This is the entire deliberation of Romans chapter six. The next chapter discusses how the *law* arouses sin. Not only are we to be dead to sin, we *must be dead to law* – that by which we were held, Paul says.¹⁹⁰ If the body of sin is to be destroyed, it becomes crucial to understand the way in which we were held by law.

This helps us combine Romans chapter six with Galatians 2:20. If the *old man* is crucified with Christ as Romans says, while also ‘I am crucified with Christ’ according to Galatians, then is the old man simply *me*?

Am *I* the old man? How then can I say, ‘nevertheless I live’ if I am crucified?

The answer in the Galatians verse is clear. It is *not I* who live. It is the life of Christ in my flesh. The old man dies and I live because Christ lives in me. I am dead, and my life is ‘hidden with Christ’.¹⁹¹ What then must I do? I must reckon myself dead indeed to sin, and I must present my members as instruments of righteousness. Then I must also understand exactly how the law of sin and death operates in me, according to Romans seven, whereby the body of sin continues to be active, returning me to the body of death.

Maintaining the carnal position

If the proposition of the gospel is so clear, what is our problem? Our problem is that we actually love our carnal position, under law. Yes, we struggle with the wretchedness that we experience, but nevertheless, we prefer to exercise our own law-bound spirituality because we can stay in control. Our latent belief is that the right use of

189 1 Cor 6:13

190 Rom 7:6

191 Col 3:3

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law, of all the laws, will preserve happiness and alleviate suffering. We even assume that we have a moral obligation to participate in law.

When things go wrong, we immediately apply the laws of self-assessment to attribute blame. Fear and survival take over as the major motivations, and our ability to function in the Spirit, as ones who are spiritually minded, is undermined. Most of all, we find it hard to step outside of condemnation. Why? Perhaps we retain condemnation as a self-governor on our actions, to make sure we don't make mistakes – or at least not too many. The boldness to simply participate in the cross, to believe His word, to live His life, to discover sin, confess it and move on, is more than our habitual nerves can cope with.

How much richer our participation would be if we chose rather to believe that our contrary circumstances are in some way linked to an intercessory participation in the fulfilment of the word of His cross?

9. Fulfilling the ministry of the cross

From the midst of a Christian community living in the cross, co-suffering with Christ, the ‘word [Gr. *logos*] of the cross’ is able to join hearers to His inclusive death – and to His life. A disobedient hearer, still laden with his sorrows, will remain outside the camp in the blackness of exclusion. Christ carried sin outside the camp and left it there, where it was set alight forever, to burn with no respite – while He Himself entered into the tabernacle of God with a holy offering. And now we have access to Him. He is the Tabernacle of God. He is the Mercy Seat of the throne of God. Because we have access, we flee to Him for refuge, for inclusion. And now we are seated with Him – mercy-seated, we might say (referring to the Old Testament ‘mercy seat’ that sat atop the ark.)

Such a community in Christ is a tabernacle, a shadow, a place of refuge. Such a community prepares a table in the midst of enemies. And their ‘conduct’, their composure, is that they are not terrified by adversaries, for to one hearer they become ‘the proof of [his] perdition’,

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but to another 'of salvation'.¹⁹² This kind of 'conflict' is manifested right before our eyes; as is the 'consolation' of Christ.¹⁹³ For we do not merely believe in Christ, but it is given to us 'on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake'.¹⁹⁴ As Peter says, when we are reproached as evil-doers, when we are made a public spectacle and suffer wrongfully, the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, the glory of God, in Christ, is actually manifested.

Paul and Peter's illustrations begin to make sense. Once we accept the call to demonstrate the cross, there are a number of specific scenarios and devices that must be employed. When reviled, we revile not again, for this is how we discount the law and show ourselves dead to sin in the interests of reconciling others. When demons confront us, we give no place to the devil. We lay our lives down by boldly undermining any basis of accusation. When infirmities strike us, we patiently glory in them. When stripes fall upon us, we see them as belonging to His stripes, whereupon our healing is assured. In all matters, we simply join Him in faith and are healed. In matters of contrary culture, we walk with a bold testimony, not condemning others but offering a testimony of victory. When we are persecuted and arrayed before judges, we are given 'in that hour' what we should say as sons of the heavenly Father.¹⁹⁶

Christ's sufferings

Why? Because these are Christ's sufferings. The fact that they are deemed to be *Christ's* sufferings, albeit here and now, in us, declares that the 'once for all' cross is manifested *here and now*. Christ Himself cannot still be suffering, and He is not. He appeared just 'once at the end of the ages ... to put away sin'.¹⁹⁷ If He had not comprehended all

192 Phil 1:28

193 Phil 1:30-2:1

194 Phil 1:29

195 1 Pet 4:14

196 Matt 10:19

197 Heb 9:26

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suffering in His *once for all* death, certainly ‘He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world’.¹⁹⁸ Instead, the suffering comprehended by Eternal Spirit is manifested here and now, in small part, as it has been in all ages. The eternal cross is manifested now. Whatever *those* visible sufferings were, these *are* those – and not something else. My sin-induced sufferings cannot add anything to the full measure that He has already comprehended. Every new trial, new to us, is already comprehended in the fullness of His cup. It cannot be that I die some death for my own sin that He has not already died. And I cannot add sufferings, even those caused by my own folly, to the cup that He has already drunk. Since Christ has comprehended all suffering, those whose lives are ‘hid with Christ in God’,¹⁹⁹ who are ready to participate in His once for all operation, may now reckon that their sufferings are part of the full measure that He has already suffered. ‘Take this [cup] and divide it among yourselves.’²⁰⁰

The practical result is this. Here and now, as Peter says, we are to watch and pray for ‘the *end* of all things is at hand’ – meaning we are watching to see the entire eschatology – the full end and accomplishment of His victorious work.²⁰¹ We are looking for what *must yet be fulfilled* – fully filled, in terms of the cup of suffering, within the ages of time. The cup which *He* drank was full. And He drank all of it. Now we *all* are to drink of it, as He said at the Last Supper.²⁰² We are now filling it out – embodying the ‘once for all’ sufferings, each our individual portion. His sufferings, which are all entirely ours anyway, are divided to us – not as if He is handing them back to no effect, but so that they fulfil His ministry.

198 Heb 9:26

199 Col 3:3

200 Luke 22:17

201 1 Pet 4:7

202 Matt 26:27

For His sake

What a wonder! Our sufferings are now said to be for Christ's sake. 'We who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake.'²⁰³ 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities ... for Christ's sake.'²⁰⁴ Equally, they are for 'the sake of His body', 'for the sake of the elect'.²⁰⁵

Perhaps it will be that several of the humiliations which He accepted once for all are about to be seen in us – together with such expressions of His love as will cover and absorb sins.²⁰⁶ We give ourselves to this, without complaint.²⁰⁷ We minister in the grace of the gifts that are given to us. We speak as the oracles of God so that the glory of Jesus Christ may now be expressed.²⁰⁸ We do not consider the associated trials to be strange, since these are merely Christ's vicarious sufferings still being expressed, amidst every tribe and tongue, until the ministry of reconciliation is complete.²⁰⁹

When defamed, we continue with 'good conduct in Christ'.²¹⁰ When threatened, we are not afraid, but rather 'sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts'.²¹¹ In other words, we enshrine His indwelling and distinguish Him as quintessential to our lives. We do not distance ourselves from Christ as if He is objective to us. And accordingly, we give the answers, on His account. We give a 'defence', a reason, for our hope.²¹² Because Christ is revealed in us, we gladly suffer as He did, the just for the unjust, that He might bring others to Himself, as He did us.²¹³ And these others, like ourselves, are indeed 'put to death', right here and now as far as 'the flesh' is concerned, that they might be made

203 2 Cor 4:11

204 2 Cor 12:10

205 Col 1:24; 2 Tim 2:10

206 1 Pet 4:8

207 1 Pet 4:9NASU

208 1 Pet 4:11

209 1 Pet 4:12

210 1 Pet 3:16

211 1 Pet 3:15

212 1 Pet 3:15

213 1 Pet 3:18

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alive by the Spirit.²¹⁴ The death-to-life transaction does take place right in front of our eyes.

So it is that we must gain confidence in the administration of the cross. We must learn to absorb elements of contrariness so that they can be mixed into the spiritual cup. Therefore we make no retort. We do not revile in like kind. When we suffer for doing good, we simply say, with Peter, that Christ also suffered, the just for the unjust. Note that Peter doesn't say, 'We also suffer'. He says, 'Christ also suffered'.²¹⁵ And in such simple words, the glory of the matter is concealed. What we suffer is only what Christ has *already* included in His cup. We are not suffering as imitators, as if adding to His work. We are merely filling up His cup to the full measure.

Bearing His reproach

And so we must learn, as Hebrews says, to 'go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach'; and then proceed with thankful simplicity into the tabernacle to 'offer the sacrifice of praise'.²¹⁶ Rebellion against Christ will burn itself out upon the community of believers, as we simply stand day by day, in every practical situation, amidst the corruption of reprobate minds, the heat of jealous antagonism and the fury of legal offence. Hostility will all be consumed outside the camp if we are willingly reproached with the 'reproaches' that fell upon Him, offering ourselves, like Christ, as dead to sin.²¹⁷

214 1 Pet 3:18

215 1 Pet 2:21; 3:18

216 Heb 13:13-15

217 Psa 69:9

10. The law

Let us continue with Paul's discussion on law and on the body of sin, for according to Romans chapter seven, sin revives and operates by law. And, of course, we hope to see sin put to death. We ought to be able to die to sin, quite easily, reckoning and presenting. However, law is the strength of sin; hence the content of Romans chapter seven. We must learn to die to law as well – that by which we were held. Law is obviously the driving force. How were we held by law? What is law? We must answer this question first of all in the most comprehensive sense and then break it down to its various elements.

In the comprehensive aspect, the term 'law' as used by Paul is a reference to the *way things are* – in the sense that reality is a constant interaction, interplay and dialogue between laws, and a constant comparison of one law with another: the law of God, the laws of creation, the law of sin, the law of my mind, the law of my own being, the law of how others behave.

Jumping to the end point, we either live the life of Christ through faith and die to the law in which we were held, or else we are pursuing outcomes (righteousness) by interacting with and comparing laws in

an endeavour to interpret them, manipulate them and harmonise them for a better outcome. The way of the world, of the community under law, is to constantly challenge all the laws of behaviour, and creation itself, in an endeavour to produce unity and safety for all. With law, the reference point is me; with the life of Christ, the reference point is the proceeding word.

The primary activity described as 'law' is the systematic observation of the gap between what I think should be, and what is. My observations produce fear and anxiety, and thus motivate me to certain actions. These passions and motivations turn out to be sin.

The argument in Galatians 2:20-21 is that if we are going to resort to pursuing right outcomes according to the machinery of law, then Christ has died in vain. Why? Because the life He died to give us is no longer being manifest in our mode of living. So, practically, I must arise each new day to live the life of Christ, the life that He has given me to live. I am crucified. Nevertheless I live, but not I. My life is Christ. 'For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'²¹⁸ So I set out to live in His faith regarding my life. I do not re-enter the dialogue concerning interacting laws. If I do, the constant interplay of one expectation against another, the inner conversation as to whether I did well or failed, the comparisons that are provoked by observations of others – all these elements belong to law. If I choose to live by them, sin is aroused and death is the result. I am failing to live the life that Christ has given me to live, here and now.

Even beyond this comprehensive view, Paul helpfully breaks the whole matter down into some of its various elements and in a sense, he runs out of 'laws' upon which to comment. There's the law of God – His righteousness. Then there's the 'law of my mind' which is observing how things work and always aspiring to the law of God, but with no capacity in itself to achieve the outcomes. Then there's the law of sin in our members. Paul explains how this law works. Sin appears

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to be inert, but as soon as a new standard or expectation (law) passes by, the law of sin is 'booted up'; '...when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.'²¹⁹ As if this is not enough, Paul finds 'another law' that's working against the law of his mind and this further behavioural attribute is bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. The whole package, he says, is simply 'in the flesh', carnal.

Paul is describing the 'body of sin' – the entire machinery or operating system that is other than living the life of Christ. In the big picture, we are incited to operate according to this system by the law of the way things are. Creation has its law – the system of cause and effect – from which we learn that conformity with the law of gravity, for example, preserves safety. Then, the conflict of laws due to the curse is also a 'law'. According to Ecclesiastes (and Paul echoes the same view) 'time and chance' is a law – vanity!²²⁰ In fact, the one law we can depend on most is the vanity of time and chance, to which God Himself has subjected the creation.²²¹

So again, when Paul uses the term 'law', he is describing an interaction, a dialogue we might say, a relationship between ourselves and everything external to ourselves, in which everything operates according to its own operating system, whether we are talking about God's law, the law of creation, the law of sin, or another law. In the realm of law, a dialogue of comparison is taking place in which each law is either harmonising or conflicting with each other law. A dialogue is set up in which we are conscious of self in relation to the state of things. If we were conscious of only one or the other, ie only of ourselves or only of the state of 'the other', there would be no dialogue, no conscious comparison, no fear, no threat, no unhappiness and no potential to become subject to Satan's kingdom.

219 Rom 7:9

220 Eccl 9:11

221 Rom 8:20-22

Law, Paul shows us, is the strength of sin, simply because we are activated to a dialogue in which we are tempted to live some life other than the righteousness of Christ.

The laws governing the body of death

‘But I see *another law* in my members, warring against the *law of my mind*, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this *body of death*? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the *law of God*, but with the flesh the *law of sin*.’²²²

Our cardinal point is becoming clear. The interaction of four laws, one of which is God’s own law, produces the body of death. Law arouses sin which leads to death. This is the law of sin and death – producing the ‘body of death’. Remember, we are hoping to be the *body of Christ*, where we bear in the body *the dying and living* of the Lord Jesus. Hence the need to understand the operation of the body of death so that we can avoid ‘law, sin and death’ as a mode.

Note the four contributing laws that Paul identifies.

1. The law of God – identified *not* because God operates according to a law, but because, when viewed objectively from an external position, His law is variously identified also as the law of God, the Royal law, the perfect law of liberty.

2. The law of my mind – also referred to as ‘delighting in the law of God’, and discussed as the law that ‘wills’ and ‘wills not’ to do.

3. The law of sin in my members – most clearly, this is the desire to be the source of my life. Remember that sin was in place before the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was partaken of.

4. Another law in my members – bringing me (identity) into captivity *to* the law of sin; this is the law that contemplates, judges and assesses the law of things, as if I am judge; then because self is the

source, I am not a doer but a judge. This operation leads to the spirit of antichrist, because I seek to create new realities as an alternative to God's reality – in the mode spoken of in Daniel: He 'shall intend to change times and law'.²²³

Identity is not law

Our point of deliverance is to accept that the identity given to us by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not law, since the word of the Three establishes identity. Identity is not law. I do not, or should not, function according to a law of being. Of course, there *can* be a law that brings *me* (identity) into captivity to the law of sin, quite contrary to the law of my good intention (mind).

We must consider then what it is that establishes 'me', that is quite other than 'another law' of comprehension. We must pursue a faith with respect to 'me' that is apart from the law and dialogue that is collecting data and setting up tension with the law of my mind, my good intentions. This is where the faith of the Son is our deliverance. 'The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith [of] the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. [And because of this] I do not nullify the grace of God.'²²⁴

Our deliverance lies in the fact that the proceeding word is *above* law and *before* law; since after creation is established, only then is there a law as to how things behave – a law of being that can be *observed*.

My eternal life needs, and is nourished by, the *proceeding* word, more than merely the creative word which brought the static, objective laws of being into existence.

When I revert to the operations of the body of sin, then I am 'carnal, sold under sin'.²²⁵ So all those conclusions and emotions based on data collection, which are not according to faith in a seed, are sin.

223 Dan 7:25

224 Gal 2:20-21 (NASU)

225 Rom 7:14

10. *The law*

That all law is upheld by the word is our starting point. That the word is entirely a relational, covenantal dialogue of three names or persons, is an essential tenet. We mean the sound of the Three giving, naming and including. This is where we bow our knees.

The word is not inconsistent with the law of God (ie the law which describes God upon observing Him), nor is it against the law of God; but the word is the active element of Their fellowship,²²⁶ which is followed by an observable law once things are created. For example, the law of a tree is observable after its creation, but is not equal to the word that created the tree at first.

Another law

It is helpful to realise that there can be another dialogue going on, from moment to moment, from day to day, that is not linked to the faith-Yahweh dialogue. This dialogue exists by assembling data by perceptions that do not come from faith, hope and love – comparative perceptions of self-doubt, self-depreciation, self-relativity, self-motivation etc. This dialogue undermines the faith of sustainable identity – the faith of the Son of God.

However, there is a fellowship of witness that is above the dialogue of law. There is a witness from the three persons releasing us from law – the witness of water, blood and spirit.

226 It is crucial to reflect that there is no static, observable law that defines who God is. If there was, it would be beyond our comprehension, amplifying the infinite gap. Properly understood, the word is the expression of who God is and when expressed, the word becomes the essence and mode of fellowship by which we know who God is. The word is thus the quintessential mode of the fellowship of the Trinity. Hence, the word which was with God, and which is God, calls us into being, and calls us to be in His fellowship. The moment we 'objectivise' the law of God, we have shifted our reference to the wrong tree, for it is an error to think it possible to know God apart from the fellowship of His word. It is not possible to observe God apart from the articulation of His word. The moment I take a position of observation, it is as though I become a judge who 'instruct[s] him'. 1 Cor 2:16. Only the one who joins His fellowship is spiritual, and able to judge all things. 1 Cor 2:15.

Alive without the law

The witness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit affirms my eternal life. There is a witness to me, and in me, and I also bear witness back to Them that Their name is marked upon me, evident within me, substantially. This must be my confession of faith. This is what it means to call on the name of the LORD. The aim of the gospel is to proclaim that each of us is alive apart from and ‘without the law’. ‘I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.’²²⁷ This is what we can scarcely believe, in that we are conditioned by the law, and to the law, as a way of life. But when we can arise to join the fellowship and dialogue of the Trinity, the witness and declaration is entirely different. We were conceived and foreknown, and are alive in an eternal moment. We exist in the fellowship of God apart from law. We aim to make all men see that there is a life, an eternal mention of *your* name, within a fellowship, a fellowship in a mystery that is one but many. We must come to know the love of Christ which even *passes the knowledge that He learned*. This is the place of song, of that which is unutterable – where faces set in constant song, live ever in the joy of knowing, not perplexed with right or wrong.

We must be lifted to the place of the birth of persons, where each is inviolable, unmarred by sin, not disfigured by law. ‘For this reason I bow my knees to the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.’²²⁸ Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom all of us are named and in whose company all are remembered and mentioned.

227 Rom 7:9

228 Eph 3:14-15

11. The mystery of the faith

It is to this dialogue of persons, in the name, above law, that we are translated by the gospel. The mystery of the faith is not just a dialogue between proceeding word and faith – even though we read that the word must be ‘mixed with faith’ in the hearer if it is to profit. The mystery of the faith is transacted from the preacher to the hearer – firstly from person to person and then from faith-to-faith. Right here we can cite the difference between the mystery of the faith and the mystery of iniquity. Iniquity is lawlessness – where each entrant and participant in the ‘righteous’ dialogue is operating according to his own law of being. Each is a law unto himself. In this case, the law must be employed to contract a harmony between legal agents.

Preaching – kerugma

Let us summarise here, in a few points, the section from *The Great Commission* on the preacher-hearer interaction which is quintessential to the mystery of the faith.

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The principal point is that the word is made known and becomes living, not by science, but by proclamation (Gr. *kerugma*²²⁹). This fact must lead us to another startling conclusion. It is this very proclamation of the word that *demands unquestioning obedience*. And this is where the mystery of the faith, the context for God and man's interaction, is either firmly established, or else warred against and imprisoned to man's lawless desire to be the source of his own destiny.

Let us consider two practical examples, one relating to marriage, and one to a routine parent-child interaction. In the case of choosing a marriage partner, we could say that first of all a word of faith is expressed in the man's marriage proposal. The will of God is not yet installed as an imperative. If, in response to the man, the woman offers *her* sincere faith, then a fellowship of *faith* is established. When, as an outcome of this fellowship in faith, they commit to marriage, they do so *believing* that this is the will of God. And the mystery is this: it is now the will of God.²³⁰ It cannot later be claimed that this was *not* the will of God. The point is that within the terms of the mystery of participation, of which we are speaking, the fellowship of faith-to-faith establishes the will of God as an *imperative*, and so calls for unquestioning obedience.

In a typical parent-child interaction, a *word of faith* may instruct a child to do, or not do, thus and so. The parent's action is not taken with an attitude of positional, autocratic dominance. He or she is not God, but must act in faith for the will of God to be fulfilled in the child's life. Where faith-obedience within a child meets the parent as a sincere son or daughter, a fellowship is established. The child is not *under* the parent, and nor should he dismiss and *depart* from the parent, considering them as being fallible and human. These are the responses

229 Key Scriptures here include Matt 12:41, Rom 16:25, 1 Cor 15:14 (using *kerugma*, Strongs 2782); also 1 Cor 1:23, Rom 10:8 (using the verb *kerusso*, Strongs 2784 from which *kerugma* comes).

230 We are not dealing with the exceptional circumstances where presumption is deemed to be faith.

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defined as Babylon and Antichrist below. In the case where parent and child meet in a decision of faith, for example about a course of study or a particular excursion outside the home, their faith-to-faith fellowship installs this direction as *the will of God*, as an imperative, to which obedience must be yielded.

The point is clear. Because we are *not* God, and because we reject both the temptation to abdicate our accountability to a spiritual leader (the principle of Babylon) and also the temptation to be a source, like God (the principle of Antichrist), we yield ourselves to the *fellowship of faith* as being the highest possible expression of God's will in the here and now. *Faith produced by the word of God to our lives is the highest authority in our lives.* *Kerugma*, proclamation, set within the preacher-believer dialogue, or the brother-brother, husband-wife, parent-child aspects of this same dimension, are the means and context by which the faith-to-faith mystery of God and man's interactions are conducted.

The proceeding word

The very fact that God's will is being wrought in the womb of time, and within His own covenantal dialogue as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, assures us of the propositional nature of God's purpose. His will is not deterministically thrust upon us, but nor is it merely a suggestion. His word is eternal, forever settled in heaven.²³¹ And yet it is being communicated to us, from day to day, in the very context into which we have been immersed through baptism. The Father's word is proceeding from His mouth, not just as information, affirmation or reiteration, but as the very *source* of life, according to Jesus Himself. One may indeed live by 'every word that proceeds from the mouth of God', just as Jesus determined to do.²³² In His temptation to turn stones into bread, Christ was not merely comparing physical bread with spiritual truth. He was declaring that eternal verity proceeds toward us, right up to the point of immanence, and then beyond it,

231 Psa 119:89

232 Matt 4:4

11. The mystery of the faith

breaking in upon our humanity as a living dynamic, just as if it were food being delivered to the physical body.

Where preaching meets believing in a *two-way dialogue*, we are able to join others to the proclaimed word. The fact that others are to believe and submit themselves to be baptised and taught, highlights the nature of the transaction that must take place. The word preached is to be met and ‘mixed with faith’; or as this verse quoted from Hebrews implies, the hearer’s faith must be *united* with the word.²³³ An analysis of this verse allows the interpretation that the hearer and the speaker must be united. Faith within the hearers unites them in a fellowship with the preachers of the word, and this fellowship is the ground of the immanence of God.

Let us say more now about this active dialogue from faith to faith. Note the discussion in Romans chapter ten. A preacher is sent. The word goes out; and if it is heard it enables faith. ‘Faith comes by hearing ... the word of God.’²³⁴ It is the *preached word that generates faith*, not just a body of information *about* the truth. Having heard the word, those who believe are able to call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Literally, they are able to respond by confessing the name of the Lord that has been *invoked* toward them. Invocation is met by confession.

Preaching – the word of faith

What is preached? Not doctrine, but ‘the *word of faith* which we *preach*’.²³⁵ What we must preach is the *word of faith*, according to this verse. And there is nothing greater that we *can* preach. Someone might ask, ‘Do we preach the truth?’ Isn’t truth the highest aim?’ And we would say, ‘Yes, we preach the truth, according to our *faith*.’ Since we are not God, we can only ever speak and preach in faith. This is our highest objective. What we seek to preach, as Paul says, is the word of

233 Heb 4:2

234 Rom 10:12-17

235 Rom 10:8

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faith. We preach the word that declares the will of God, for we proclaim what *will be realised* once it is heard, met, believed and *reckoned* back in appropriate response to the word preached. Preaching must be answered by reckoning (Gr. *logizomai*, to reckon, impute).

This *mystery* operation, where what is willed by God is declared in a word of faith-imputation, and met by believers who are 'fully convinced' of God's ability to perform the word (like Abraham), is what the Scriptures call 'the mystery of the faith'.²³⁶ Leaders, like the deacons mentioned in 1 Timothy, are distinguished by their ability to hold and dispense this mystery.²³⁷

Faith to participate

Let us now consider the practical implications of what we have laid out. How do we participate with one another? How do we live and work together in a way that shares in the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ? Let us use the example of a regular practical situation which may present itself in church life.

1. A directive word may be given to us – for example, the word to build a platform or organise a meeting.
2. We are called to work together toward the righteous outcome (the righteousness of Christ).
3. It requires 'great faith' to maintain a fellowship in relation to this word (recall the centurion²³⁸).

The alternative is that our work can be reduced to an exercise in delegated authority, where competing ideas and value judgements place us 'under' or 'over' one another, thus marring the fellowship.

How then do we maintain a fellowship in the word that came in the first place – for example, the word to build a platform, or to hold a convention? In what way might we cease to be fellow-disciples and become mere colleagues and co-workers?

236 Rom 4:21; 1 Tim 3:9

237 1 Tim 3:9

238 Matt 8:10

Authority

Consider these steps.

1. All authority belongs to Christ.
2. The authority and power to *achieve* a righteous result, the right product or outcome, is resident in the *word* of Christ.
3. The *hearing* of this word, within a fellowship of brethren who are laying life down, should immediately produce *obedient faith* in the hearers.
4. Now these hearers fellowship in the word of Christ, laying down their lives, and, according to individual grace, ie the capacity to suffer toward the righteous outcome, they carry this word in a fellowship until the result is achieved.

Now let us expand the point. Each hearer receives the word in obedient faith. In the word itself, and within the fellowship of the word, is the authority to engage the cup of sufferings that is required for the outcome to be realised. There is both a corporate cup to be drunk, and an individual portion of suffering associated with the 'grace' of each fellow. True fellows will seek to enter into the sufferings of one another, and thus share in the sufferings of Christ toward the desired outcome. Each will seek to bear his own load, but will also joy to 'bear one another's burdens', since this is the 'law of Christ'.²³⁹

The alternative scenario

The alternative to this true fellowship begins to become obvious. Consider the following generalised scenario, which can regularly trouble us, at least in part, unless we show 'great faith'.

1. A directive word may come to us – again, to build a platform, hold a convention, or organise a meeting.
2. If the word comes to me, for example, I may feel empowered by this word. I may feel that this word has come to me because I'm the one with the skills, the only one, to bring it to pass.

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3. I may now take hold of this word as if the authority was delegated to me, based on my qualifications. Perhaps I even act as if I am the source of the initiative, or at least a co-origin. Instead of responding to the word according to grace – the grace of Christ, and my own share in that – I may behave as if I am in charge of that portion of the authority assigned to me.

4. If I now lead and organise others in the wrong mode, I will delegate the job to others in such a way as to grant them acceptance, value, empowerment and authority according to the same principle of delegation. I will now marshal them to my delegated authority, instead of calling them to a fellowship in the directive word.

The mode of 'delegation'

Taking this further, we could say that I was called to gird myself with a 'towel', but instead I have put on a 'crown'. Now others who are serving become subject, and are held ransom, to my delegated attitude. If I'm sluggish and discontent, they are subject to this and cannot easily bypass me to serve with a liberal attitude. Instead of involving them in a fellowship where they also can share according to grace and multiply grace, they are constrained so that they can only function at my initiative and within the lines that I set. I don't free up the task so that all can participate. I lock it up to limits that I set. I enlist them as responsible to my delegated authority, not as fellows in the word of Christ. They cannot easily 'go past' me to serve more fruitfully, because they are now positioned under me. I may even attribute their fruitfulness to my leadership, in order to draw further kudos and empowerment.

If I were laying life down, showing true leadership and prospering fellowship, I would not be governed by fear and self-serving. I would see myself as 'under authority'.²⁴⁰ I would rest in the authority of the word of Christ which will produce the righteous result. I would not

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fear or restrain the enthusiasm of others, but guide them toward the fellowship of one mind. I would not have to permit good ideas or naïve offerings, as if to refuse them is a rejection of those offering. I would not have to capitulate to equality, consensus or power-sharing, since I am not grasping equality, validity or power in the first place. If I am genuinely washing others' feet, then they will either join me in this fellowship, or else exceed me, and the word, to their own hurt.

Benefactors – consultants

The mistaken profile is what we might call a consultant, an advisor, an assistant, or a 'benefactor' – the term Jesus used in Luke's gospel. There are those, Jesus said, who dispense authority so as to appear to do good, as benefactors. 'Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors'. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves".'²⁴¹

As the reference shows, this entire mode must be 'not so' among us. The only way to govern is to serve. The purpose of authority is to reveal the genuine good of the other.

Guarding the fellowship

If we revise the Godhead model, we can see that fellowship only exists where each properly reveals the authority of the name of the other. There is fellowship in the Godhead because the Father is fully honouring the Son, etc. When each of us is revealing the authority, by name, of the other, then there is true fellowship. Any practice less than this will lead to an uneasy, social, collegiate relationship. Fellowship lifts each and every participant up to his full grace-authority – otherwise we are reduced to competitors within a pecking order.

241 Luke 22:24-27

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Colleagues? Co-workers?

At first, these terms sound appropriate – and they could be if they describe fellow-disciples who are laying life down. Customarily, however, ‘colleagues’ so called, can stray toward seeking equality in a way that wars against authority; and co-workers stray toward dividing the task without fellowship.

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Once we are converted to true participation in Christ's sufferings, we are prepared to place our death completely in the hands of others. This is what Peter had to come to before he could feed sheep and strengthen his brethren. Peter had loudly professed his enthusiasm and his readiness to offer himself (just as we do). But he wasn't converted until he put off this childish bravado and idealism, and committed his life to a death that would reveal his brethren, and not himself.

Conversion – joining the sufferings of Christ

Have we each set ourselves to reveal the name of the other, by participating in his sufferings? Do we even want to know what they are? Are we prepared to enter into the lives of one another, and into the death and sufferings of another – particularly those struggles that are part of the fellowship required to see each directive word fulfilled? We cannot reveal the other until we understand his sufferings.

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Accordingly, should we not be asking each other, ‘What labors are you enduring, toward the common word of Christ? For what goal are you suffering? What death are you dying?’ For whatever common purpose you are suffering, I will come and suffer too. I will become a fellow-sufferer, a fellow burden-bearer.

If my life and death are genuinely placed at the disposal of Christ’s brethren, then I am ready to ask, ‘In what manner, and in what issues would you ask me to die – re-adjust, re-prioritise, re-focus?’ What is it in me that needs to die, so that this re-direction may take effect?

The alternative case is that we are merely assistants, who are maintaining control of our own level of offering, and defining our own death, albeit in impetuous, Petrine professions.

On reading where Peter objected to Christ’s sufferings, saying, ‘Not so, Lord!’, we can tie his contrary attitude to the many ways in which we likewise become noble ‘assistants’ but not fellow-sufferers. In modern terms, we could infer that Peter was offering an advisory role, as if a good marketing plan would achieve the Messianic cause with minimal suffering. In truth, we are often guilty of the same pursuit of the easy way, particularly when the directive word carries a cup of inconvenience and hardship in its embrace.

Conversion is manifested when we become a co-sufferer. As Jesus said, ‘You are those who have continued with Me in My trials’.²⁴² When we become fellows in trial, then Satan, who desires to ‘have’ us and ‘sift’ us, has no more ground to oppress, tempt or devour us, for he comes and finds nothing in us of which to take advantage.

The ‘great faith’ of the centurion

Our subject is: How does the authority of Christ operate to produce a righteous outcome or product? The story of the centurion’s ‘great faith’ offers several keys.²⁴³ The elements of the story – authority,

242 Luke 22:28

243 Matt 8:5-13

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the word, faith, healing (righteous outcome) – are the same ones that we are considering.

On first appearance, the centurion lesson seems simple. He is part of an authority system – albeit one that functions by delegation within the ordinance of God (military authority is one of God's ordinances²⁴⁴). Others obey his word within his authority system. He is a man under authority. To the centurion, Christ appears to be in charge of *all* authority, and so he expresses faith in Christ. Surely, Christ need only say the word and the servant will be healed. The centurion states these obvious facts. So why is his attitude called 'faith', and why is it commended as 'great faith'?

First, as we said, the centurion recognised that Christ possessed all authority. He expressed trust in Christ. Is this the 'great faith' for which he was commended?

We need to look further. The crux of his response was that the centurion showed commendable insight as to the power of the word. Even within *his* system of worldly authority, the power to achieve each goal was in the *word* – 'I say to this one "go" and he goes'.²⁴⁵ This is interesting, because from our perspective, we know that the centurion's delegated authority structure based in ordinances, and Christ's serving authority system, were totally different orders. Jesus said so Himself when He compared governing by lordship and governing by service.²⁴⁶ Yet the centurion observed that the common element was the *authority of the proceeding word*, the directive word, when one was under authority. Now we are coming closer to the definition of 'great faith'.

He demonstrated a unique attitude to the word. The word, when expressed within an order, was not objective information, or an expression of the will of another. He understood it to be a command, and accordingly, the word was the point of power and capacity. 'Great

244 Rom 13:1-3

245 Matt 8:9

246 Luke 22:25-26

faith' was not just compliance, or even obedience, but was a motivating response to the command. Faith in a word enabled an activation of energy, authority and power, because faith created a meeting point between a *will* expressed by a word, and a willing *participant*. This is where the theme of *fellowship and participation* enters the discussion. Faith in a word creates an immediate fellowship, where the power of both speaker and hearers is focused in one spirit toward the energy required to accomplish the command. Hearers rise up, their prayers are answered and works are accomplished.

Hearers either participate in this dialogue and fellowship to see righteous outcomes achieved, or they are actively excluded from the outcome of the word.

The word never returns void. Not only does the word proceed (cf the 'proceeding word') but it always *returns*, and does so having produced the intended outcome, positively and negatively.

Faith – obedience

Plainly, the centurion was stating the whole basis of faith – namely, obedience. He was reflecting the proposition that reality, as a whole, is an imperative. Our lives are under command – and we are only free within this command. We are all under authority whether we are in the military, business, social or religious setting. Faith is the capacity of obedient response to the word. Therefore faith only *derives* from the *initiative* of the word, when received, and in that sense it cannot be conjured up by 'taking thought'.²⁴⁷ It is a gift that is resident in the word. I believe in the word, therefore I speak, I impute, I act, I 'am'. Faith is always connected to the word. This properly answers the age-old question as to whether faith is a gift or an accountable response that we make. It is both. We do not need to seek motivational speakers with their positive principles for success – all of which war against fellowship and bring us to the regimes of law and fear.

The fellowship of faith

Our central point is helpfully clear. Hearers who receive the word, receive Him and are given ‘the right [authority, Gr. *exousia*] to become children of God, to those who *believe* in His name’.²⁴⁸ The faith generated by the word – the faith of the Son – creates the fellowship of the Son.²⁴⁹ Faith itself becomes a miracle fellowship in which the blood cleanses us and the power of the cross operates.

It is no wonder that Paul looked back to the time ‘before faith came’, when seekers knew only the guardianship of the law.²⁵⁰ And with the law, which was weak through the flesh, came inevitable condemnation and fear.²⁵¹ And, through fear, believers were all their lifetime subject to the devil.²⁵²

As Jesus showed at the time of His temptation, the word that ‘proceeds from the mouth of God’ is the only answer to Satan.²⁵³ When we seek to be the source of what proceeds, Satan connects our reason and our desire to be the source, with law. The result is fear and fear leads to death. Fear and faith are mutually exclusive.

But gloriously, as Paul showed us, when the word came, faith came, and generated a fellowship in the Son. Every other kind of fellowship than this is only social, and in part draws well-intentioned believers back into the ethos of Satan’s kingdom. Hence it is essential that we understand the link between faith and fellowship.

Faith and authority

The essence of faith is the capacity to live freely in a fellowship of life, where life itself flows from the directive word within an order. There is no sense of being constrained under delegated authority. Authority is never ‘ours’ even though it is manifested in us. It all

248 John 1:12

249 1 Cor 1:9; 1 John 1:3

250 Gal 3:23

251 Rom 8:1,3

252 Heb 2:14-15

253 Matt 4:4

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belongs to God. We honour Christ by accepting the authority He gives us.²⁵⁴ However, we hold it lightly because all authority and power to accomplish righteousness belongs to Him. Accordingly, we don't struggle with the fact that living authority passes through us, by the proceeding word, from day to day.

We simply are what we are. It is known what a man is, and as the wise man said, 'Whatever one is, he has been named already ... and he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he'.²⁵⁵ Whether in a delegated ordinance structure, like the army, or in a business structure based on relative ability or experience, or whether in serving God in the fellowship of the body of Christ, *it is known what we are, and we should be equally secure and resolved to take our place, both in receiving the word and in giving the word.* We are not empowered either by receiving the word, or by declaring it. Because all authority comes from God, under Christ's headship, *we may enjoy harmony right across the institutions of life.*

This is the echo behind the centurion's words that draws the commendation of 'such great faith'. He is settled with the principle. He is secure with the way things are. This is how life comes. This is how the command is achieved in social institutions, as well as in the case of Christ's authority over all things – sickness, demons etc. In the matters of authority, directive word, faith and obedience, there is no difference; and here is the crunch-point: *It is no more difficult to believe and obey in one setting than in another.*

In authority or under authority?

This was an amazing insight. The freedom, insight and great faith of the centurion were shown in the fact, as he said, that he was a man under authority. Even though his whole system was one of delegation, and therefore vulnerable to corruption, he did not actually function by *delegated* authority. He did *not* have an attitude of taking authority to himself. He was not comparing himself with Christ as if they were two

254 Mark 13:34

255 Eccl 6:10

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men who were *in* authority – but as ones *under* authority. The power to accomplish was in the word. His attitude showed a secure *knowing* of himself, not one that sought empowerment within a power structure. We, likewise, should exercise authority with sober judgement, not boasting of a false gift. True authority is the ‘Christ’ dimension in all of us that is laid down for the revealing of another. Then authority is itself a true fellowship in one heart, not an association of many contributors, each competing as a delegate for the authority of delegation

Faith comes by obedient hearing

Moving further on in the centurion’s story, we can strengthen the point that faith itself, and ‘great faith’, comes by obedient hearing of the word. There is only one source of faith. Great faith is exhibited and identified when it is linked with obedience. As far as the centurion was concerned, great faith came by hearing the directive word that was proceeding. The power to achieve right outcomes was in the proceeding word. This word was in the mouth of a messenger within an order. The giving of life and the achieving of righteous outcomes were the purposes of the order, and obedient faith was the first evidence that the word of life had been received.

All our work, we might say, again remembering the centurion’s story, is for the benefit of the other – whose life, work and righteousness depend *on* the word that is proceeding. This word is the basis of relationship with one another, and therefore the basis for fellowship. Without a word-authority relationship, there is no fellowship in life. Life cannot be imparted. Healing cannot be imparted. The orderliness of coming and going (‘I say to one, “go”’) is all related to being under authority. Nothing can be gained by discarding authority, or by seeking self-fulfilment. Only when one is under authority and functioning to benefit the other, can there be any viable sense of fellowship in life.

Faith and imputing

Although we have tackled the subject of imputing, elsewhere,²⁵⁶ the present context makes it essential to show where faith and imputing relate to one another. Using Paul's words about the 'spirit of faith' shown when 'we believe and therefore speak', we could say that faith becomes imputing at the point of confession – of speaking.²⁵⁷ Faith in the word creates a meeting point between the 'immanent' and the material, whereby the *substance* of the word comes into contact with present reality, with what 'is', and then commands that change or outcome to which the word was proceeding. The word of God imputes or reckons substance to an outcome that we have not yet seen materialise – calling 'those things which do not exist as though they did'.²⁵⁸ When we believe the word, we begin to impute substance to the reality that is proceeding as a command. Imputing is the active reckoning of substance to this word, and begins with confession. We believe and therefore we *speak*. We have faith, and then we impute by confession – and by profession in our lives.

Faith comes – faith works

As we know, faith comes, and only comes, by hearing the proceeding word. It does not come in any other way, and there is no other definition of faith than that which is aroused as a motivating responsiveness to the command of the word. Once faith has come, it *works* by love, as Paul says.²⁵⁹ And the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts.

256 See Victor Hall & Murray Wylie, 2004, *Take My Yoke*, Seedlife Publications, Forest Glen.

257 2 Cor 4:13

258 Rom 4:17

259 Gal 5:6

Ability linked with grace

To further understand the proposition here, we should recall the parable in which talents are given according to abilities.²⁶⁰ The lesson of the parable is unveiled when we connect *abilities* with *bios*, or 'first man'. Then we connect *talents* with the gifts of grace that are given by Christ as part of the *new* man. We are born with abilities, and when we are born *again* we receive 'talents'. This use of language is slightly different from the common usage, since we usually speak of a 'talented' person as one with exceptional abilities. We commonly link talents with abilities, whereas the Bible word 'talents' is more than natural giftedness, and is rather linked to the deposits of grace which Christ gives to us, over and above human abilities.

Obviously, there is a compatibility and harmony between our God-given, created *abilities* and our God-given *talents* as members of the new creation. We soon realise, of course, that the harmony of these requires the power and wisdom of the cross. In other words, abilities on their own, without being connected to our new-born gifts, are likely to seek and find expression that doesn't pass through the cross – as could happen, for example, if a naturally skilful speaker did not submit to the cross and to Christ in seeking to be a preacher. He may have speaking ability, and not necessarily have received the gift-grace of a teacher. Equally, one called and given grace by Christ to preach may not necessarily have an obvious ability in public speaking. Paul clarifies the contradiction of the cross when he highlights that 'not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty'.²⁶¹

This doesn't suggest that Christ's gifts are out of step with the Father's created abilities (or else the Godhead would be contradicting

260 Matt 25:15

261 1 Cor 1:26-27

Himself). But it does show that the cross, where the flesh is planted in the death of Christ, is the only means of establishing the whole 'new man' and of removing the enmity that could stand between the law of natural ability and the grace of Christ. The Father has submitted and committed His purpose for every individual to the revelation of the Son. Therefore, we cannot act as if the creative Father has ordained us to authority, according to our ability, when we are told that the Father's life must be planted in the Son. The testimony that we are of God must be a three-fold witness. It must be clear that what we offer is from the Father (witnessed by our ability), from the Son (witnessed by the grace of Christ) and from the Holy Spirit (witnessed by the specific leading and power that is evident in the actions we take).

The principles of Babylon and Antichrist

To give an illustration of the point, let us imagine two workers at a church office working-bee. Both may have natural ability, but to differing degrees and in different fields. Both may also have deposits of grace. Let us present the negative position first. The one with exceptional natural ability may see himself as an expert. He may have worked hard to hone up these abilities, and he may not be aware of the difference between ability and grace. If he were, he would submit natural ability *to* grace, and function according to grace first of all. Instead, he rates his authority in the task according to his ability and success in worldly terms, or achievements in business etc. If he now exercises his ability, apart from the cross, and without functioning in the grace of Christ, he has dropped to the 'wretched' condition of Romans chapter seven (lawful ideals with no power). In this condition, he and anyone joining him in the 'under and over' legal attitude are of the spirit of Babylon (remembering the tower of Babel that symbolised all fleshly hierarchical authority structure).

If he does have grace-authority, in this or any other aspect, and adds this to his legal, fleshly and 'wretched' condition, he is dangerously close to demonstrating the spirit of antichrist

12. Conversion

(remembering that ‘antichrist’ is that element that is gifted by Christ, which goes against the fellowship).

The positive situation is as we said above. It is essential that we see ourselves as under authority where the directive word of Christ, delivered by messengers, is the basis of faith and participation – not skill. Our ‘great faith’ is shown in our obedience and in our desire to maintain the fellowship of the word, above our own self-seeking. So we don’t offer our skills as if we are expert consultants and as if we have authority based in skill. If we function in this mode, the flow-on is that we will maintain autonomy over our offering and will dictate where, when, and to what extent, we will help. Naturally, this wars against fellowship and is incompatible with those who are endeavouring to guard the fellowship.

We should ask ourselves therefore, ‘When asked to serve, do we reveal the other, or do we see these requests as an opportunity to exercise control as an expert and consultant?’

The basis of all ministry

Needless to say, the entire basis of our operation with the restored Ephesian Pattern is the word of life – and the fellowship that grows from it. We are not camped around common religious interest, history or friendship. Supposedly, we have rejected the stones of law, and chosen the proceeding word.²⁶² Our lives and activities are directed by the living word, to which we respond with ‘great faith’ to join the covenant dialogue and fellowship in which this word is being outworked. The centurion story defines for us the community of faith. ‘Only say the word.’ We are not working by delegation, nor in peck order. We are not capitulating to peerage, social covenants or conventions. We are not organising ourselves in ‘under and over’ strata according to ability or according to grace for that matter. We are laying life down in love for the brethren and sisters, trusting that as we

262 Matt 4:4

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forfeit our own agendas the word *will* empower us in the right and proper way to fulfil His righteousness.

This must be the ethic by which we live and function, and wherever we are not clear on how this operates, we must submit to being guided and taught, lest we harm the fellowship of the word.

Walking in the light

In this present context, then, walking in the light can be defined as walking in the *progressive illumination regarding the fellowship that is required to see the job done*. We walk in this fellowship and we walk in a common understanding of those sufferings, both individual and corporate, that are essential to the righteous outcome. We willingly enter into a fellowship in those struggles, which others must engage in if they are to take their proper place in the work.

13. The meaning of prayer

There is perhaps no more arresting moment in the Calvary story than when Christ prayed for the 'cup' to be taken from Him, saying, 'Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done'.²⁶³ Doubtless, we have mused often and deeply on the meaning of the cup and on the extent to which Christ agonised in prayer as He drank this cup of suffering for the sin of mankind. Challenging, too, is His earlier statement, 'You will indeed *drink My cup*, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with'.²⁶⁴ Immediately we are led beyond the display of vicarious ideas about the cross, to accept the challenge of actually participating in the sufferings of Christ. This is our subject here.

Understanding suffering

As a simple starting point, there are three dimensions of suffering in which we participate. We shall list them as: suffering for change,

263 Luke 22:42

264 Matt 20:23

13. *The meaning of prayer*

suffering for the kingdom, and suffering for intercession. These dimensions need considerable expansion, but we shall be brief here because we intend to focus on the third of these, suffering for intercession, with a particular emphasis on intercessory prayer. The glorious truth for Christians is that our sufferings, which He drank as His sufferings, are now entirely meaningful within His eternal purpose. Because Christ has drunk the *full* cup of all our sufferings, within the capacity of Eternal Spirit (see later), that portion which is handed back to us so to speak, has been mixed with Eternal Spirit. Now as we live in faith, all these sufferings have significance and purpose within the realm of the cross as *part of the cup* which He has already tasted.

Suffering for change, the first aspect above, embraces all the futility, hostility, chastisement, scouring and purging that is either permitted or laid upon us by a loving Father. We should remember that it is said of Christ, 'It pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.'²⁶⁵

Suffering for the kingdom, the second aspect above, is also part of the call laid upon every disciple. 'Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.'²⁶⁶ Paul spoke to the Thessalonians about their 'persecutions and tribulations', and told them that these were the 'manifest evidence of the righteous judgement of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you'.²⁶⁷

In the third case, we are called to suffering for intercession, first of all in prayer, so that we can participate in the reconciliation that is active here and now.

265 Isa 53:10

266 2 Tim 3:12

267 2 Thess 1:4-6

Gethsemane here and now

‘Could you not watch *with Me* one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak ... O My Father, if this *cup* cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.’²⁶⁸ Compare the verse we quoted earlier: ‘You will indeed *drink My cup*, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with’.²⁶⁹

Let us state the wondrous conclusion here at the beginning. You and I, through prayer, may enter Gethsemane with Christ, here and now.

Let us go further. By participating in *His* cross, I may take up *my* cross, as the gospel bids me to do. By considering suffering to be part of *Christ’s* suffering, *my* sufferings gain meaning. By understanding the full cup that *He* drank in which He tasted death for every man, *I may also* drink His cup. Through prayer, I can now step across the threshold, into the ever-present dimension of the Trinity in which the Everlasting Covenant is being outworked. I can *enter Gethsemane*, here and now.

One glance at the cross compels us to conclude that if ‘*One* died, for all, then *all* were dead’.²⁷⁰ Paul says that we are constrained by the love of God. What does he mean? He means that the single cross of Christ is inclusive of the total experience of all men, of their death and life. Upon observing Christ, who offered Himself by Eternal Spirit, we are watching a complete explanation of God’s loving capacity, and a full rendition of *our* condition in relation to God.²⁷¹ He means that all men are comprehended in the death of Christ, and in fact, all will die the death of Christ in one way or another. Either we participate in the

268 Matt 26:40-43

269 Matt 20:23

270 2 Cor 5:14

271 Heb 9:14

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cross and *die with Him to sin*, or we *die the eternal death* that is described by the cross.

Once we understand this inclusive aspect, the cross becomes an individual experience, as well as a collective one. If I participate in the cross, I am included in His life. If I reject it, I am included in the eternal death that He died for all. The one death, once for all, is the complete rendition of God and His word.²⁷²

Upon seeing His one inclusive death, I am constrained to lay down my life and to enter into the life of another, namely Christ. By joining the fellowship of that one life, I find life and I can give life. In Christ, in the dimension of 'spirit and life', I can identify with the lives of others. I can pray to see others revealed within the one, corporate life of Christ. I can pray for the wisdom and power of the cross to bring life to others. I am able to pray, 'Not my will, but Yours be done'. I can also watch carefully and resist the temptation to withhold my life. This is the real meaning and power of prayer.

In prayer, we can go beyond empathy for those who are suffering. Christ did not merely feel sorrow for mankind. He *drank* the cup, the whole cup. He entered into the sufferings of mankind. While our limitation prevents us from actually entering the sufferings of others, we may indeed enter *Christ's* sufferings and thus share in the same cup. Then His sufferings, in which we share, bring life. Through prayer we can arrest death and mix the sufferings of others into the cup that He drank through Eternal Spirit. Then we become involved in ministering life to others. As the following verses show, through prayer, we may save a soul from *death* and also give *life*.

Giving life and saving from death

'Pray for one another, that you may be *healed* ... if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know

272 Heb 7:27

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that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will *save a soul from death* and cover a multitude of sins.²⁷³

‘Now this is the confidence ... that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us ... whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and *He will give him life* for those who commit sin not leading to death.’²⁷⁴

Note the *emphasis* in the two verses above. We are called to pray in such a way as to ‘save from *death*’ and ‘give *life*’. We are called to participate in what Christ accomplished – in the entire ‘operation of God’.²⁷⁵ This is remarkable.

The depth of this matter is that in prayer we are activating the *power* and *wisdom* of the cross toward the salvation of every individual.²⁷⁶

The subject becomes deeper still. The Holy Spirit joins us in ‘one Spirit’, so that we are of the ‘same Spirit’ with Christ in His intercessory work.²⁷⁷ He ‘always lives to make intercession for them’.²⁷⁸ That’s why He spoke of doing ‘greater works’ once He went to the Father.²⁷⁹ Wherever we are of the same Spirit in seeking to restore others, the gifts and abilities that operate *by* the same Spirit begin to break forth.²⁸⁰

Eternal Spirit

As a brief revision on Eternal Spirit, note that we are quoting from the verse in Hebrews that reads, ‘How much more shall the blood of

273 Jas 5:16,19-20

274 1 John 5:14-16

275 Col 2:12 KJV

276 1 Cor 1:24

277 1 Cor 6:17

278 Heb 7:25 KJV

279 John 14:12

280 1 Cor 12:4-11

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Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience ...'.²⁸¹ Note first of all that Eternal Spirit is not merely a reference to the Holy Spirit. A proper reading is that: He offered Himself *through Eternal Spirit*, not *the* Eternal Spirit. We shall understand the importance of this soon.

Now we know that 'God is Spirit', and as we have often said, the 'Spirit' that God is, is not a kind of substance or energy.²⁸² The Eternal Spirit through which Christ offered Himself, is simply the sum total of the capacity of the three persons, who are 'Spirit'. Whereas God is 'Spirit' in His essential being, when we read Eternal Spirit we should simply think of the eternal purpose expressed in Christ, or the Everlasting Covenant. Eternal Spirit is the nature and capacity of God's giving as three persons. Everything that They are, and all that They embrace as three persons, when considered together, define the realm of Eternal Spirit. If Spirit is the very essence of God as three persons giving, then Eternal Spirit is the outflow or proceeding of the three persons, in covenant love.

The capacity of God as Eternal Spirit, His capacity to *proceed*, is fully demonstrated in Christ – 'who *through eternal Spirit* offered Himself *without spot* to God'.²⁸³ Christ's experience is a complete illustration of the eternal volume of dynamic offering and loving. And we are told that in this context, the whole of our contrariness was removed by the operation of God. Although He was made sin 'for our sake', yet by the close of Christ's offering, He was 'without spot'.²⁸⁴ All corruption had been removed.

The 'operation of God', or 'working of God' (various translations²⁸⁵) is a reference to the same dynamic as Eternal Spirit. We might equally refer to the Melchizedek Order, the order by which

281 Heb 9:14. The word 'the' before Eternal Spirit, is not in the Greek text

282 John 4:24

283 Heb 9:14

284 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 9:14

285 Col 2:12 NKJV and KJV

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eternal resolution and perfection are achieved. It depends on our point of emphasis.

This capacity of Eternal Spirit which God *is*, when out-breathed and proceeding by the Holy Spirit, is the capacity to captivate all death and raise it to life. When the love of God is shed abroad in *our* hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are joined to this *same* capacity of Eternal Spirit, and it is *by* this capacity that we are constrained, ever after.²⁸⁶

Christ's cup

Armed with this understanding we can now ask, 'What was the meaning of the cup that Christ accepted in the Garden of Gethsemane?' Was it just a cup representing the sin and guilt of mankind? Yes, the Lord did lay upon Him 'the iniquity of us all'.²⁸⁷ But the cup was more than this. The cup was indicative of His full acceptance, within the dimension of Eternal Spirit, of the *eternal death* of every soul, so that He could give *eternal life* to every soul. He tasted death for every man.²⁸⁸ Remember, our dual subject is *saving from death* and *bringing life* through prayer. By the grace of His Father, 'for whom ... and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory', He comprehended the total experience of every soul.²⁸⁹ By the multiplying capacity of His Father, and through Eternal Spirit, He embraced the total experience of every soul and authored the pathway from death to life for each one. The 'cup' was the full administration of this process, for every one and for all time.

Take My cup

This is the cup in which we are asked to share. 'Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink ... you *will indeed drink My cup*.'²⁹⁰

286 2 Cor 5:14

287 Isa 53:6

288 Heb 2:9

289 Heb 2:10

290 Matt 20:22-23

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This is the meaning behind Christ's agonising question, 'Could you not watch with Me one hour?'²⁹¹ Christ drank the whole cup of intercession. He now asks us to *fellowship* with Him in His sufferings, not merely to suffer. This is the meaning of the communion (fellowship) of the bread and cup by which we show forth 'the Lord's death'.²⁹² The fellowship of the body and blood is the capacity and reality granted to us to be one spirit with Christ and with one another. We are able to enter a fellowship 'in Spirit' in the corporate life of Christ and with one another. In this fellowship of spirit and life, we participate in the administration of the cup. How does this take place? First of all, we declare the word of the cross. As the living word is preached, we declare to the hearer the reality to which he may impute substance if he will believe. We preach so as to include another *in* the cross, where the wisdom and power of God bring salvation, healing and restoration to those who are dying.

The immanent covenant

This word of salvation is 'near' because the covenant discussion of the three persons is immanent to us.²⁹³ Let's pause and reflect. The very idea that we can come boldly to the throne of grace to find help assures us that the realm of God's covenant is within our grasp – ever-present and near to us. How is it that the sovereign will of God, determined *outside* of time, can still permit our involvement in a prayerful interaction *inside* time? There is something amazing here.

In His sovereignty, God has given us 'time' as a context for interaction. God has not already determined all the outcomes. The *cross* is the meeting point of eternal life and eternal death. If we 'lay hold upon eternal life', we are *appointed* to obtain salvation.²⁹⁴ On the other hand, if we resist the Holy Spirit, then we are *appointed* to wrath,

291 Matt 26:40

292 1 Cor 11:26

293 Rom 10:8

294 1 Thess 5:9

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and that ‘which is determined is poured out on the desolate’.²⁹⁵ In His sovereignty, God sends us His word. Then as we interact with this word in the immanent dimension of the Spirit, God sovereignly makes us vessels of mercy or wrath.²⁹⁶ Both are said to have been ‘prepared’ beforehand, because God is outside of time. He is both beginning and end – end and beginning. Eternal Spirit is the dimension in which both are comprehended, as well as the process between the two. This is the realm ‘in Spirit’ that we join through prayer.

So then, the *Everlasting* Covenant, the conversation of the three persons regarding the will of God that lasts *for ever*, is taking place right now. And we are joining it through prayer. Consider this. In Gethsemane, Christ, the foreordained Lamb was not taking the cup for the second time. As He accepted the cup and proceeded to Calvary, He was as much being ‘slain’ *before* the foundation of the world, as He was being crucified *in* time for all to see. There are not two cups. The two dimensions – outside of time and in time – are identical. It is only to mankind, bound *by* time, that one operation seems to be *in* time, while the counsel of God appears to be *before* time began.²⁹⁷ It was the task of the apostles, as it is the work of messengers today, to proclaim to hearers that what is witnessed at the cross is in fact His ever-present, everlasting purpose in full demonstration. By so preaching, the immanence of the operation of God, the ever-present nature of Eternal Spirit, comes alive by the word, and hearers are able to join the covenant dialogue. This is why prayer to ‘save from death’ and ‘give life’ has so much meaning.

How to pray

So to pray is not merely to make a request. Let us slowly digest the steps. When we pray, we are coming to the throne of grace. We are

295 Acts 7:51; Dan 9:27

296 Rom 9:22-23

297 Titus 1:2

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participating in, entering, and relating to, the lives of others, in the corporate Christ, and in the dimension of 'one Spirit'. We are now bearing the burdens of others, and we are seeking to bridge the gap between death and life.²⁹⁸ We intercede. We go between. Now the Holy Spirit joins us to the realm of Eternal Spirit, where all these aspects of death are fully embraced. The dislocation and suffering of others is now *mixed with Eternal Spirit* – that is, the suffering finds its meaning within the realm of the cross, as *part of the cup* which He has already tasted. In groanings that are too deep for words, and in prayer languages given by the Holy Spirit, He helps us to know what to pray, and how to pray.²⁹⁹ We are convicted of the gap between God's will for another person, and his present condition. We ourselves become convinced of the spiritual reality to which those in need should impute substance. We are moved with conviction. We are praying that this very same conviction will come upon the one who is in need. We are now joining with Christ in the 'strong crying and tears' of Gethsemane.³⁰⁰ We are displaying the same 'godly fear' for which He was heard by the Father. It is at this point that the Scriptures are fulfilled: 'In that day you will ask in My name, and ... the Father Himself loves you.'³⁰¹ 'Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.'³⁰²

From judgement to discipline

We are praying in one Spirit, within the realm of our corporate life and awareness, that mercy will triumph over judgement, that conviction, in the same Spirit, will come upon the one who is dying. Our prayer is that the sentence of eternal death will be commuted to a pathway of suffering and discipline that will lead to change. As each of

298 Gal 6:2

299 Rom 8:26

300 Heb 5:7 KJV

301 John 16:26-27

302 1 John 5:14

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us accepts our portion of the total cup, then together we ‘fill up’ the full measure of the sufferings of Christ for others.³⁰³

Empathy?

As said earlier, we are able to do more than simply empathise, as if we must try to imagine how the other feels. What does it feel like to be in pain, or to lose a loved one? Christian writers have mused on the question of whether it is possible to share the sufferings of another. We know now that it is only possible in Christ, for we are not entering the suffering of *another*, but the sufferings of *Christ*. We are enabled, through Eternal Spirit, as it was for Christ, to reach out to the realm of the death and life of the individual, to nominate the situation, and to participate in the dialogue of the Everlasting Covenant taking place in the immanent dimension. We thus mix a contradictory situation into the cup of Eternal Spirit, where the *three persons are as much functioning right here and now to save the matter, as they were at Calvary*. It is essential that we understand the cross in this immanent dimension – just as Abraham, Moses and David did in the time before Christ.

Then when we pray, we are not merely listing our requests. Rather, we have *the capacity by the Holy Spirit to enter the dislocation, in the realm of immanence, and to participate in the same resolution as Christ achieved for every individual, by His intercessory pathway*. It is upon this pathway that a soul is saved from death, and is given life. The power in our prayer is the *same power as was wrought in Christ* when He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.³⁰⁴

Paul’s prayer

To conclude, Paul’s prayer in Ephesians and his heart-felt aspiration in Philippians become a helpful summary. Let us compare the elements in both these passages – Phil 3:10-11 and Eph 1:15-19.

303 Col 1:24

304 Eph 1:19

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1. *To know Him.* First of all, this subject of prayer compels us to 'know Him', to have a 'spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him'. Then we pray that our knowledge will make us effective in leading others to know Him.³⁰⁵

2. *The power of His resurrection.* Then we are stirred to participate with Him and in Him, in the 'same Spirit' with Him, in *His* operation by which others are brought from death to life by the 'mighty power which He wrought in Christ ...'.³⁰⁶

3. *The fellowship of His sufferings.* Now we are convinced that to fellowship with Him, in any way at all, is to share in His reconciling work – to join Him in Gethsemane, where, through prayer, we mix all dislocation into the one cup, the cup of the Eternal Spirit which God is, which cup was given to Christ as the total work of redemption.

4. *Conformed to His death.* We are constrained by love, upon looking at the cross, that since one died, all are dead. We are constrained to lay our lives down in the fellowship of one Spirit. We are members and participants in one corporate life. Our lives are not our own. Yes, we are individuals, but more than this, we share in the collective life of the one Spirit. We are constrained by love to live the rest of our lives for Him who died and rose, and to serve in His ministry of reconciliation.³⁰⁷

5. *If by any means.* We are persuaded that this is the only way to truly live, in resurrection power, while still in the mortal body.

6. *The prize of the high calling.* We find meaning and significance for the whole of our future lives. We are persuaded now to press on, forgetting things that are behind and reaching forward to embrace change, until our full and final change in the resurrection. This is the hope of His calling and the glory of His inheritance in us.³⁰⁸

305 Eph 1:17

306 Eph 1:19 KJV

307 2 Cor 5:15-19

308 Eph 1:18