

THE CROSS FOR OTHERS

By James E. Seward

This is NOT a message on missions. This is about the Father putting us on display before the world. In the Christ-Life, we talk a lot about Christ coming forth out of me. How does that work in my life?

All along in your Christian life the Father is revealing himself to you so you get to know Him. He takes you through a lot of different circumstances and situations. It is not that at some point He stops dealing with you to teach you Himself and then starts reaching out to others. That's not the way it works. It's a mixture. He's working with you in different circumstances, but He's also got you on display so that others can see you.

I am really going to be emphasizing the fact that God wants to have Christ seen in you. We need to be really sure that we as vessels are firmly established in what Paul calls "the Mystery". And the mystery is: Christ IN you, the hope of glory (Col. 1: 25). In Ephesians, Paul talks about the fellowship of the mystery. He wishes us to have a knowledge of the mystery. So this has to be something that you really know.

Now to start, let's talk about what Jesus had to say. This is one of the most profound statements about the cross that you can see in the scriptures.

John 12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

Jesus is essentially talking about Himself going to the cross. This is the dying of Christ to bring forth us as fruit. It is you and me being presented to the Father as born again believers, vessels that Christ will live His life in. If there is no dying, there will be no fruit. Christ sets forth the pattern of how life is to be lived, whether it's His life or our life.

One of the sideline points that I'd like to make here is that Jesus never really lived His own life. You may ask, "Well, how did He live?" He lived the life of His Father. He stepped down so that the

Father would live His life (the Father's life) in Christ. So if you see Jesus going through the whole New Testament, essentially you see the Father manifesting Himself and living His life through this vessel called Jesus. This is the pattern that He shows us.

Now Paul is quite aware of this. There is no other writer in the scriptures that associates the cross with salvation except Paul. Salvation is the result of us coming through the cross so that Christ may live His life in us. Paul also knows that the life of Christ will not flow out of me unless I've been through what the cross really means. In Phil. 3:10, Paul says:

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.

Now, that's quite a statement for Paul to make at this time. He was not going to live much longer. He has already written about the cross and the fellowship of the mystery. You wonder why he is so taken up with this at the end of his life. Well, Paul knew that the life of Christ would not come forth out of him unless he had conformity unto what the cross really meant.

Why should Christ come forth? He wants to come forth out of you so He can be life for others.

How do we become conformable unto His death? And, why should we become conformable unto His death? Well, you're not going to really know Christ unless you are conformable. Also, others will not see Jesus in you unless you are settled on this point.

How do we become conformable? Let's look at Paul's letter to the Romans.

Rom. 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God

You know, the only body that Christ is going to have to live in is yours and mine. Paul's exhortation is that you present your body unto Christ. If you do that and He takes up residence, you will be holy and acceptable unto God. The only person in whom the

Father is well pleased is Jesus, His Son. And if you have presented your body so He can live in it, He will be pleased with you_ In this relationship, Jesus can be seen by the world. When_ we talk about a living sacrifice it means that He will be able to use you as a vessel to live in and continue His ministry on the earth. This is the living sacrifice.

When I first got saved, this was completely foreign to me. I remember I got saved on a Monday night at 11:00 on October 18, 1954. It was real. I had a witness in my heart that God had forgiven me of my sins and I was saved. The man that lived downstairs took me to a church. It happened to be a black church. There was a white evangelist there that night and he was preaching about dedication and giving your life to Christ. I was really moved by it. So I went down to pray when they gave the altar call. I knelt down with a dear old black brother who had his arms around me, one of the elders of the church_ I told the Lord, "I'll go through anything; I'll suffer anything; I'll give up anything if I can get to know You in your fullness." In fact, I said, "Lord I'm going to give You a blank check. I'll sign the bottom of it and You fill in what You want out of me."

Now that was a pretty drastic time for me. I had been going through a hard time at work since getting saved. What with the dirty jokes, the cussing and the drinking that all the fellows were doing, they thought I was pretty strange. I was getting a lot of tribulation at work, but at the same time the Lord turned the skillet over and I fell right into the fire. I eventually lost my job and lost money. It was pretty drastic. So I would say this: If you have enough gumption or desire to present your body a living sacrifice, things will begin to happen to you. God wants us to give our all to Him. Basically this is a love act_ I love Him so much that I'm going to give Him my whole life.

Now I want to give you a picture of some of the crazy things you will go through when you make a commitment like this.

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Isaiah 45:3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called you by your name. I have named you though thou hast

not known me.

5. I am the lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

6. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.

7. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.

Now that's way out! I remember when I got saved someone told me, "You're going to have peace! You're going to have joy!" Well, I'd like to find that person and hit him in the mouth. Because when I got saved I did not have peace and joy. All I got was trials, pressures and hard times. I wondered, what in the world is going on here? At work, I was losing my job. They were giving me a hard time there. I went to a dear old brother in the church who had a Quaker background. This old man was 80-something, close to 90. He knew the bible almost by heart. I thought if anybody knew God, Brother Barker could pray away all my hard times. So I told him about my troubles and he almost shouted! He said, "Well, praise the Lord! God has picked somebody out here whom He's going to reveal Himself to!" I thought, "Hey, you're missing my point. I'm not interested in knowing God much more. I just want to be delivered from my hard times."

I didn't quite see it at the time but he was telling me that I was blessed in going through these hard times. Well, I didn't see much blessing there. But notice the words that we just read from Isaiah... And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. Well, this is Old Testament stuff, but this seemed to be what God was doing to me at the time.

You are not going to learn a whole lot by just having blessings. When you're only blessed you may think that God is working in you, and so forth. And when things are hard, God is not working. But God is going to be working whether it's good or bad. You will learn more in the darkness and secret places than when God is blessing and making things look "right" on the surface.

So, this is part of what the cross is. If you are going to be a living sacrifice God is going to put you through an awful lot of crazy

stuff This is not something accidental; God plans this stuff. He plans it for me. You are going to wonder, "Why is this happening to me. I try to serve the Lord. I try to read all of Warren's books. I try to listen to Jim Seward once in a while. Why in the world do I have hard times?"

Now, don't be shocked at what is going on. This is normal. This is the beginning of BEING A LIVING SACRIFICE. God is putting you on display before the world! He's putting you in

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these situations. They are not trials. I call them "periods of opportunity". Why? Because it's these circumstances that God uses to reveal Himself.

On the night I was saved I said, "I don't want to believe in fairy tales, or dreams, or "religion", or this preacher, or this denomination. I want to know a real God." So God just rolled up His sleeves and started putting me through this stuff I didn't have any teaching on this. Everything I heard was "You've got to tithe. Don't miss church. Don't miss prayer meeting. Witness to everybody." So, here I am going through all these trials in quite an ignorant state. I did not know what the Lord was doing. But at the end of the year He began to tell me what was going on. I have a portion of scripture that describes this.

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek

17. For therein is the righteousness of God from faith to faith: as it is written_ The just shall live by faith.

Here is the righteousness of God displayed before the world. How is it done? From faith to faith. The just shall live by faith. Now that's also a quote from Habakkuk, one of the Minor Prophets of the Old Testament. If you go back and read that it says, "the justified ones shall live by the faithfulness of God." The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, says, "the just shall live by His faithfulness."

I used to think I better have faith in God or I won't please Him. But that's not the point. We live on the fact that God means what He says and He accomplishes what He says. For example, if I say to you, "I will meet you at a certain street corner at 2:00", and I show up a 2:00, well, you see I am faithful. I do what exactly

what I say I will do. So the promises, the adequacy of God the Father, is His faithfulness to us. It's not that we trust Him, it's that He trusts us. He will make Himself available to us faithfully in any situation we are in.

Now going back to Romans, here is that righteousness of God displayed before the world `from faith to faith. " What is that? Well, if God puts a person into a situation where he has to go through some sort of pressure or hard times, you will find God working it out That's one situation of faith. Then He takes you through another situation of faith. Then another one. Then another one. You begin to see God's righteousness displayed in every situation that comes up, one right after another. This is the beginning of being a living sacrifice.

Now, remember. You don't make this up. You don't go trying to make up situations. I'm going to tell you right now: Avoid as much trial and hard times as you can. God will drag you into these things whether you like it or not. So don't make it up! It is something that He does. What we go through, from faith to faith, is knowing Christ. If we take Paul's phrase from Ephesians where he says, "you have not so learned Christ", it means that people were learning historical things, not Christ related to me in these situations.

Remember something here. The renewing of the mind is not an automatic thing. As you go through one circumstance to another and see His faithfulness. As you see His faithfulness your mind is going to start changing. That's what we see back there in Romans 12:1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...

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Paul cautions us not to be conformed to the world. Now the world works by connivance and scheming and trying to make things work yourself. Paul says, don't do that, but be transformed by the fact that your mind will be renewed.

Your mind will be renewed as you move from one circumstance to another. That's just the way it works. Every time you go through one thing to another, to another, to another, your whole outlook is going to change. You'll see that it's not a matter of you doing it yourself, or Satan working through you. You'll come to see that God is arranging your life. We become what the scripture

says, "His workmanship". The renewing of your mind is a process produced by going through C&S: Circumstances and Situations. We're coming to what I call an attitude of being a living sacrifice. Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

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

8. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Let this kind of mind be in you_ Jesus was obedient to the Father. He yielded to the Father. He went through this death so He could bring life to us.

Many people apply their minds to a lot of situations that have nothing to do with Christ. It is necessary to give our minds over to the Christ to have His attitude. This is the cross working in us for others.

Here is an example of Christ is being made conformable to His death. A lot of you have read the scriptures regarding the night that Jesus was arrested. Peter popped up with his sword and he whacked off the ear of one of the servants named Malchus. To paraphrase in my own words, I can see Jesus saying, "Wait a minute! Peter, put your sword up. This is not the way things are done." We know that Jesus could have brought 12 legions of angels at the snap of his fingers. But Jesus knew that He was going to go to the cross to be the sacrificial Lamb for us. Poor old Peter thought he was helping out the Lord, but he was going against everything in principal that Christ wanted to get across. So Christ told him to put the sword up, and of course, He healed the ear.

Here is another situation. Christ is before Pilot. Pilot must have been very confused by this man who wouldn't defend himself Now picture Christ standing at this crooked trial. He has a crown of thorns on His head, He's been beaten and mocked. It brings back a portion of scripture from Isaiah.

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Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet he opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not

His mouth.

To me it is awesome that He didn't defend Himself. He just stood there as a lamb. A lamb is so humble; it will just stand there. You can kill it; you can skin it; you can eat it; you can love it. So Christ was actually available to the world that He created and He kept His mouth shut.

The question comes, "What do I do be conformable unto His death?" Guess what the "doing" is. Nothing! But just take what God drops in your lap.

We go back to Romans 12:1 again This is being a living sacrifice: You've been crucified with Christ; nevertheless you live.

Christ will be living in you and He will walk you into some crazy circumstances. He's doing that so He can put you on display before the world, a living sacrifice.

What can I do to be completely conformable unto His death? Nothing! Just take it! This is the cross operating in you for others. Others are watching you in your circumstances.

Now, to explain a little bit about Christ reprimanding Peter for cutting off the ear, I want to refer to Paul.

II Cor. 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.

4. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (earthly methods, but mighty, through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Though we walk around as human beings, in our "earth suits", we do not carry on like the world does. The weapons of our warfare (if you want to call it that) are not earthly weapons. But it's letting God handle earthly situations. In fact, you don't even "let" God. To say I let God do anything is ridiculous. It means that if God walks me into a situation, I will not roll my sleeves up to solve them. I do whatever the Lord will lead me to do, but mostly I just watch the Lord work it out.

Peter must have learned something about his relationship with Christ, and the flesh. And of course, Paul probably taught him some things too. Here's what Peter tells us:

1 Peter 2:21 For even here unto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps:

22. Who did no sin, neither was guile (complaining) found in His

mouth:

23. who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously.

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See the pattern? Christ didn't complain. He didn't gripe about it. He didn't threaten. He committed Himself to His Father, who judges righteously. His Father is handling Jesus' life. Here is Christ, pouring His life out for others.

When Paul got his calling of suffering for the Lord, most people would have run away in selfishness. No one in his right mind would want any part of this. Look what the Father says about Paul:

Acts 9:15 Go thy way: for he (Paul) is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel:

16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

No one normally wants to suffer. I don't like suffering. But if you love the Lord enough you'll go through anything for Him. This is a love relationship. I love Him enough that He can use my body in any way He wants to get the Son manifest through it. This is the living sacrifice. This is the vessel that will show the effects of the cross that reveals Christ to others. This is the Father using us to produce the life of Christ. I call this the Lamb Spirit.

This is not for selfish people. If you have to deal with selfishness, then we had better go back to the basics.

We have been talking about the cross for me. Now let me go on to talk about the cross for others.

Col. 1:24 (whereof I, Paul, am made a minister,) who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church:

25. Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God. Did you see this? He talks about filling up "that which is behind the afflictions of Christ". Our bodies are the containers that Jesus wants to live in. If He's living in my body, there will be some afflictions in it. If the world looks at us with our hard times and

our griping, like everybody else does, they will say, "You're no different than I am." But if you can imagine going through pressured times, praising the Lord and loving Him, either they will say, "You're crazy", or "You're supernatural."

Realize this. Christ has not finished going through sacrificial things for others. I'm not saying there was anything else for Him to do in saving us when He was the atoning sacrifice. On the cross He said, "It is finished."

But there is a working out of what the cross is to us as believers as we walk through life. Even though salvation is a finished thing for believers, He's going to put us through some stuff for the rest of the world to see. Paul writes about the sufferings of his ministry. And he rejoices in his sufferings! That's amazing! How can he rejoice? Well, he knows that he's bringing life to other people. That's the joy! It's not being blessed, or whatever. It is the fact that I know I

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have been yielded enough so that Christ is living His life in me. Paul says this is for His body's sake, the church. We believers lay our lives down for each other in our fellowship.

I have said this before: this is not the life of a self-centered person. The believer has to have a renewed mind to be adjusted to this kind of living.

I've had an itch to preach this message out to the world. I see some people on television who need correction_ Warren has warned me not to get involved because they will eat me up! But I was reading in John 17 and Jesus made this statement:

John 17:9 I pray for them (believers, us): I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Notice that Jesus is praying for believers, not the world. It almost looks like He is ignoring the world. I think that's interesting.

When I first got saved I was told that the world is going to hell and I'd better go out and witness. But Jesus isn't praying for the

world, but for "those whom thou has given me". He's praying for you and for me. He's talking about an inner union. Now lets go on.

John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as lam not of the world.

17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth

18. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one:

23. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

This really heavy stuff! I don't want to make us sound like an exclusive club, but look at the context of this scripture. The Father and Christ are trying to show us how complete the inner
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union is. It is imperative that we come to an inner knowing of this union. This is a relationship that is completed by the Father for us. This should be an awesome reality of how much the Father loves us and has taken us into His heart. The outcome of this union is that the world will see Jesus in us.

In our meeting, we sing a little song that says, "I see Jesus in you". I have heard some believers criticize us for singing this song, thinking that this is very trivial. Its purpose is very profound. It is the opposite of being critical of each other. It is seeing the one important Person that lives in all of us. The point of seeing Jesus in one another is portrayed in John 17:16-23. Here's what that scripture did for me. It took away that itch to go out and preach to the world. Now, of course, I am available to anybody who wants to talk about the Lord. I will witness to anyone the Lord wants to open up to. But the very first place to

minister, to edify, is at home. I see Jesus in my wife. I do all that I can to amplify Jesus in her.

I mentioned this to a friend who said, "It's nice to encourage people that way." But it's more than encouragement. It is laying my life down for the brethren so life may pop out of them. Christ's life. This is shared with the Christ-Life fellowship. We are not exclusive, but we are laying our lives down for each other. It takes time, and it takes effort, to sit with someone who is going through some problem. In giving up my time that I may be a blessing to them, I see them come to the fullness of knowing that inner Christ that lives inside. This is the cross for others in the fellowship.

Paul describes what's happening here:

1 1 Cor. 3:1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation from you?

2. Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

3. Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

4. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward.

Did you hear that? This is the living sacrifice that Christ may be seen in us. God is putting Christ on display in me.

1 1 Cor. 4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

This is the fellowship: that we become servants to each other.

Not that we are leaders; we are your servants. We continue:

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6. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.

9. persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

This is awesome scripture! The clincher here is that your body is the place where Christ will live His life. If He's going to walk you into some circumstances, it's because He has a passion to love the lost. He has a passion to edify others. He will take your body as a living sacrifice. It may cost you. It may hurt. Sure, it hurts! Death is going to work in you but life will be poured out. Christ's life will be poured out for others. "Death worketh in us, but life in you."

I have some examples from Norman Grubb and others. Norman Grubb was my spiritual father. He was the head of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade. His whole passion was giving your life up for Christ. A lot of people thought he was a very tough man when it came to missions. But up in the Congo, a number of years ago, there was an uprising. A lot of the missionaries were afraid. Some of them left the field, caught planes and got back home. They had to face dear Brother Grubb. He wasn't very kind to them. Didn't we give our lives up? Didn't we die when we gave our lives to Christ? Why had they come back? They left their post.

Well, one of the ladies got caught in this uprising. The men of the village gang-raped this woman. They humiliated her. She did not escape. But this dear saint of God stayed there. She ministered and loved back to the people who had treated her so badly. And she won them back to Christ.

I heard Norman extol the wonderment of that woman, this saint of God. He asked, "Can't we be raped for the Lord Jesus Christ?" Now, that's a way out statement, but it's a fact that her body was used and misused. Essentially, she stayed at her post and became a living sacrifice displaying the life of Christ to those men.

I think of Come Ten Boom, a Dutch lady who knew the Lord. She and her sister were in a Nazi concentration camp during WWII. They had to stand stripped naked in the cold, and so forth. Corrie's sister would stand naked in front of her so the snow wouldn't hit her. Well, the

sister finally died. They had put this woman through all terrible things. After the war, she traveled around testifying about Christ. She happened to be in Germany and one of the guards from the concentration camp came to the meeting. She thought, "How in the world can I forgive this man who treated us so badly?" But she did forgive him. Now this sort of thing doesn't happen to everybody, but she was willing to be what Christ wanted her to be.

Here's another situation. When I was first saved I lived upstairs from Mr. Gustafson. He was a Swedish fellow who lived the life of Christ. I was saved about 2 weeks and Mr. Gustafson wanted to take me to a hospital to visit a dear brother who was dying. Well, after our visit, as he was backing out of the parking lot, he backed into a lamppost and knocked the light off. I thought, nobody saw it so we can just go on home. But he said, "I've got to tell this to the hospital superintendent." The superintendent told him to go on; nobody saw him; don't worry about it. Mr. Gustafson said, "God saw me do it. I've got to be honest with Him. I have to be able to sleep at night with a clear conscience." "OK", the superintendent said, "but it's going to cost you a lot of money." Well, a bill did come. It cost him a month's salary to pay for that lamppost. And you know what happened to me? I got a living example of a message that spoke to my heart about lying

I would say this: Here I am on a teaching tape, or I may be lecturing somewhere. But that is the least effective way to get this message across. As Mr. Gustafson lived it out and paid the money, it made more of an impression on me than all the sermons I ever heard. I like to hear preaching, but a thing that is lived out will get the truth across more than talking.

We can be like marbles in a winepress. As the crusher comes along, we will give off sparks. If we will yield as grapes in the press, juice will flow forth for others to drink.

You may say, "I've been mistreated; I've been done wrong." But if the Lord is allowing you to go through that He's doing it so others can see Christ in you. You may have been had or been used; are you going to complain about it? Or are you going to have the attitude that Christ had. God is going to put you in circumstances where your body will be used up for others.

I just recently had a situation. I went through some bad times and somebody came along and said, "Maybe God will bless you in the long run." Well, I don't want to hear that! If I'm going to accept hard times or pressures, I'm going to do it with no expectation of anything coming back to me. As Paul said: I want to know nothing except Christ, and Him crucified. As Paul wanted to be conformable to His death, I personally want to be that way to others. As to looking for a blessing at the end? Phooey on it! That's a selfish outlook

Now in this whole business of the cross, guess who your first ministry is to? It's to your mate, whether it be to a husband or to a wife. We've got to say to the men: Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. And we say to the wives: Love your husbands as unto the Lord. This is the cross working in you as you work in the kitchen, around the household. Wherever you are.

God pulled a real trick on Job by putting him through all those hard times. He put him on a dung heap, gave him boils, and took his family away. And here he is on his dung heap with his prayer partners. They looked at him and said, "Boy, there's got to be something wrong with you. No one can go through this kind of hell. What have you done!" Well, they go through all

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those chapters, discussing back and forth. God wanted to shut the whole bunch up. Guess what He told Job. "Job, you pray for your friends. Pray for these men sitting with you." It shows that Job's deliverance came from thinking of others. This is a picture of the cross. You don't think about yourself: "what can I get, how can I be blessed, how can I get to Heaven on a flowerbed of ease". Rather you should ask, "How can I be a blessing to others?" God says: Pray for your friends. This means you've got to really be involved in a sacrificial way to bring life to them.

One of the other stories in the Old Testament which shows a real picture is the story of Joseph. Joseph had a vision of God as a teenager. His brothers thought he was stuck up and figured he considered himself better than others. They got jealous and thought of killing him. But instead of killing him they sold him to trade merchants. He was then sold into slavery in Egypt, to Potiphar's house. Potiphar's wife took an interest in him and

wanted to have sex with him. Joseph asked, "How can I do this thing and sin against God?" He didn't want to displease the Father. Of course, she lied about it and had him stuck in jail. Heaven knows what indignities they heaped upon him in jail. But God was with him and began to bless him. Joseph began to find favor with the guards. Eventually he got delivered by interpreting dreams. He became the prime minister of Egypt. Low and behold, who should show up but his brothers from Israel, looking for grain. We read this play, back and forth, between Joseph and his brothers. The brothers thought that Joseph would take vengeance on them for the lousy thing they did. Do you remember what Joseph told them? "You may have meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

There is significance in the situations we get into. We can ask, "Why did this happen to me? Why is this so bad?" I want you to know something. Every thing that has to do with us has to do with Christ. It has redemptive purposes to it. It is not an accident that things happen to us. But God wants to manifest Himself to others. He's going to do it through you. It may be evil or hard time. But it is for one reason only: that people may know that He is God.

II Cor. 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, I am strong.

Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing. Therefore we as human beings do not have the "where with all" or ability in ourselves to live a Godly life. Strength will prevail in us as weak vessels because we have a strong Christ within us.

Heb. 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of my faith: who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God

This is what the Savior went through. If He's going to live His life in you, He's going to have the same attitude. We can not BE Jesus, but we can just contain Him. We are to just be ourselves naturally, with Him coming through.

What is the JOY, the pressure, of this whole thing? The knowledge that the pressures on me are for others to see Christ. And I am fulfilling God's Will.

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Does it hurt? Yes, it does. Does it cost? Yes! This is expensive stuff to the flesh. I mentioned in the other tape that I asked Norman Grubb what he prayed for. His answer? "Father, be absolutely ruthless with my flesh." This conforms to the cross. Do not let our Christ-Life message turn into just a "bless me" movement. We are not here just for deliverance. Norman Grubb had a pet expression. He would say, "Go have a bump and learn." If we are having bumps sometimes, God has planned that we learn something. We are to be expendable that Christ can be released for others.

Here is an important bit of scripture that explains what is happening:

1 I Cor. 1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort:

4. Who comforted us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God

5. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted it is for your consolation and salvation.

7. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. Why is God putting us through all of these things? If I were in trouble I would want to be with a person who experienced the same thing. We go through situations where Christ will comfort us. And it makes it possible that we can comfort others. These situations prepare us that we can minister to others with a real understanding and compassion.

Why should we glory in the cross?

Gal. 6-14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

15. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

We have been cut off from the ways of the world. We have been

cut off from sin. The world has been cut off from us by the cross. Now religion (circumcision) doesn't mean anything. What is significant is that we are a new creature. We are a living sacrifice. We are a vessel that Christ lives in.

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What comes out of this? Paul's desire and passion is that Christ is manifested. Why? For others. What is Jesus' passion? Being the sacrificial Lamb for others. And He will be that in you.

The world longs to see Jesus - Jesus in ME. They don't want to see Baptists. They don't want to see Methodists. They don't want to see Reformed folks, or Catholics, or Jews. They want to see Jesus, and God has made it possible that Jesus can be seen.

I may not be all that I profess to be, but it works in my life. If you ask me how I am spiritually, you'll have to ask God... or go see my wife. She can tell you all my faults! But if you want to know what I'm like spiritually, ask her. I have no idea. I'm not trying to be spiritual. I'm just trying to learn what the Father wants me to be. If I get this message to you, it's not just sermon notes. The Lord has given this to me personally - for ME. I'm sharing it with you, but really I'm confirming what the Holy Spirit is teaching you. Warren and I are not teachers. We are confirmers. We are learners.

I want to close with a thought here. You may ask if you can live up to all this. Well, no, you can't. You are weak. But you have someone in you who can do it. I have a favorite passage of scripture that I lean on, and here it is:

Eph. 3:20 Now unto Him (Jesus) that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

21. Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end Amen

Now remember that you have another Person working inside of you. He is the one who will carry you along and empower you. Once someone asked me about my spiritual life. I said, " I feel like I'm a leaf on a river. A leaf on a river has no control of itself. It just goes where the river moves." What I discovered is that the river is God. You are not serving Him as much as He is carrying you. All He asks of us is to yield and to learn. With our yielding and our willingness to learn, I feel that He will take us through as

He wants.

Bless your hearts! I really hope this message will bless your hearts.

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