

Crucified—Yet Living—with Christ

***“I am crucified
with Christ;
nevertheless I live;
yet not I, but Christ
liveth in me: and
the life which I
now live in the
flesh I live by the
faith of the Son of
God, who loved me,
and gave himself
for me.”***

—Galatians 2:20

ONE OF THE IMPORTANT

ways that we develop the “mind of Christ” is to remember Jesus’ example of being daily crucified in his sacrifice of all earthly things, yet living to perform his Father’s will for him. While Jesus’ ultimate crucifixion on Calvary’s cross was the literal climax of all the experiences of his earthly ministry, it was his daily sacrifice and fulfillment of his consecration vows which truly showed his faithfulness to God in being crucified, yet living. Jesus told his disciples, including us, that if one truly desires to follow in his footsteps, he must likewise “take up his cross daily, and follow me.”—Luke 9:23

It is to this end that Paul, in our opening text, states that he was “crucified with Christ.” It is clear from Paul’s words that he was not talking about literal crucifixion, because he immediately says, “nevertheless I live.” Then he explains that his “life” consisted of Christ living in him, by means of faith. To Paul, that which was crucified was his former will, desires, and deeds, which were now to be replaced by those exemplified in his perfect pattern—Jesus. He was crucified, or dead in Christ, yet he lived for Jesus by serving him and the Heavenly Father. Similar to Paul, we are also to be crucified with Christ as he was, yet living in faith. This, in reality, is the true essence of the daily fulfillment of our consecration vows. This is what is meant by the taking up of our cross daily [being crucified] and following him [living in and for him].

REFLECTING ON OUR CONSECRATION

Do we often reflect on the circumstances that brought us to the point of consecrating our lives to God, and on the vast change that has taken place in us since first we believed? Surely, we who are striving to walk in the steps of Jesus, were drawn to God in the first place by an appreciation of the fact that we were in need of a Redeemer, and that Christ had died for our sins. We came to know that this was necessary if we were ever to come into God’s favor. Based on our faith in Christ’s precious blood, we gave our hearts and will to God in full consecration. Then, through the begetting power of the Holy Spirit operating on our minds, we began to know and appreciate more fully the fact that Adam was created perfect, that he had sinned willfully,

and that therefore the sentence of death was pronounced upon him. We saw that this meant Adam's extinction. We saw, also, that this sentence applied not only to Adam but to all his offspring—even to us.

How wonderful was the knowledge of the philosophy of the ransom—that since all were condemned in Adam, even so, because the perfect man Christ Jesus took Adam's place in death, the condemnation could be lifted from Adam and all his offspring. Then came the full realization that salvation was not just for us, as consecrated footstep followers of Christ, but for every human being that has ever drawn the breath of life. We understood that this was to be accomplished by a “restitution of all things”—a restoration of mankind to perfection, to have communion with and be reestablished in the favor of God. (Acts 3:21) We appreciated that these great truths were all made possible, and guaranteed, by Jesus' death as the ransom price.

It was after we realized these truths that the hope of being a part of the body of Christ became a real and living hope, that if faithful we would have the responsibility and opportunity of bringing blessings to all the families of the earth. Let us be assured of this—that it is the wonderful hope of man's full recovery from sin and death that makes our consecration to God a joyful experience. Without this understanding, we would have little in which to truly rejoice. This beautiful gem of truth is held out before us just as it was held out before our forerunner, Jesus, “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.” (Heb. 12:2) We must never lose sight of this lofty and holy purpose of God. It is really his eternal purpose, formed from the beginning, to have this earth filled with perfect human beings who will love God supremely and their neighbors as themselves.

WORKERS TOGETHER WITH GOD

It is through the kingdom that this eternal purpose is to be realized. (Eph. 3:10,11) We, as Christ’s footstep followers, were included in the structure of God’s original design and purpose, to be instruments to help bring his objective to fruition. The Apostle Paul expresses both our privilege and responsibility in the matter thus: “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace [favor] of God in vain.”—II Cor. 6:1

It is because of our appreciation of the wonderful provision of mankind’s restoration in God’s plans and arrangements, and especially that we have been invited to share in this greatest of all creative works, that we are moved to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and to be crucified with him, yet live by him. With Christ as our pattern, we endeavor to walk in his footsteps, experiencing the things that he experienced in order to be conformed to his image and to be developed, as he was, as a sympathetic high priest. We read in Romans 8:29, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

The experiences we encounter in the narrow way of sacrifice have a very definite correlation to our being crucified with Christ. The Apostle Paul

expresses the matter in more detail with these words: “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead [the first resurrection]. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect [mature], be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.” (Phil. 3:8-11,15,17) Then again, in Galatians 4:19, Paul states, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.”

HOW CRUCIFIED, YET LIVING?

As we contemplate all these things, and the great privilege set before us, we ask this all-important question—what is meant for us to be crucified with Christ, yet live in him? The Bible clearly indicates that we are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. As previously quoted, Jesus said that if we desire to come after him we must “deny” ourselves—that is, renounce our own will and follow the will of God, as exemplified in his perfect Son. We must also daily “take up” our cross, by following in Jesus’ way of sacrifice and suffering for righteousness. So if we

desire to walk after him, in his footsteps, and pattern our lives after his, let us find out what our perfect Master did. How did he spend his life and strength as he served his Heavenly Father?

In the Book of Isaiah, we are given a prophecy concerning Jesus and his mission. Our Lord applied the prophecy to himself in Luke 4:18,19, and therefore we can be certain that he used it as a guide for his ministry. The prophecy reads, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”—Isa. 61:1-3

As we analyze this wonderful prophecy, it becomes evident that Jesus was to spend his ministry—this most important part of his life—making a proclamation of the kingdom. As we review the gospels, we find that this was one of the primary things that occupied his time and efforts. Even the miracles of raising the dead and healing the sick were illustrations of the kingdom and the great blessings that would come to the people when it would be established. Preaching the Gospel of the kingdom was the chief concern of Jesus. This was his life, and it is to us an important part of how we “yet live” even

as we are crucified with Christ. His was a life of service, spending his strength and talents to the glory of the Heavenly Father and to the benefit of his fellowman, especially to those whom God had called—his disciples. Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, left his place of glory and honor in the heavenly realm and became the greatest servant the world has ever known.

In another prophecy concerning himself, Jesus says, as recorded by the psalmist, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.” (Ps. 40:9,10) With this sense of fulfillment, it was possible for Jesus to say on the cross with confidence, “It is finished.”—John 19:30

IN NEED OF CHRIST’S ROBE

As we strive to be crucified, yet live, with Christ—that is, endeavor to walk in the footsteps of Jesus—we become more acutely aware of his perfection and of our imperfections, for try as we might, we cannot perform perfectly. How thankful we are for the provision of Christ’s “robe of righteousness.” (Isa. 61:10) In God’s sight, we are righteous because of this, and we fulfill the requirement that those who engage in his work must have “clean hands, and a pure heart.” (Ps. 24:4) However, our standing with the Heavenly Father through the righteousness of Christ should not remove our desire and responsibility to be as nearly pure in

heart, thought, word, and deed as it is possible for us to be. In fact, the Lord expects that we will attain to perfection of intention, or will. In his mercy, he accounts the perfection of intention for the deed.

The experiences we receive in conjunction with our activity in the Heavenly Father's work are the tools he uses to help us grow up into Christ, and to help us be conformed to his image. As our forerunner, Jesus was conformed to the image of his Father, not in body or person, but in his spiritual mind. The Apostle Paul states, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect [complete in character] through sufferings." (Heb. 2:10) Further on, Paul says in Hebrews 5:8,9, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect [complete in character], he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." In John 14:9, Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In other words, the mental and moral characteristics of Jesus were the same as those of the Father.

ENDURING SUFFERING

The Apostle Peter relates our experiences incurred in the Heavenly Father's work, and our being crucified with Christ, saying, "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even

hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” (I Pet. 2:19-21) The word “suffer” means to endure or experience. How did Jesus suffer for us? He did so by holding forth the Gospel message, and because he did, we are blessed with the Truth. However, this activity brought on persecution by his natural brethren. He was the object of scoffing, ridicule, derision; he was even accused of blasphemy. With all of this, however, our text continues, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”—vs. 23

In endeavoring, then, to be crucified with Christ, we can expect to receive evil for good, and these experiences will be difficult. However, they will be used by the Heavenly Father to form Christ in us—thus allowing us to live in him. In all these experiences we must conduct ourselves as he did, so that as representatives of the Father we will bring only glory to his name.

MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

The Apostle Paul, in II Corinthians 6:3, states the matter thus: “Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed.” In the concluding verses of the previous chapter, the apostle summarizes what our ministry is, saying, “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are

ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (II Cor. 5:18-20) The unmistakable thought is that the ministry of reconciliation was originally given to Jesus. After his death and resurrection, this ministry, and the responsibility that is inherent with it, was passed on to his footstep followers. In confirmation of this, Paul says, as quoted earlier, that we are "workers together with him."—chap. 6:1

To the Apostle Paul, and to us also, the privilege of the ministry of reconciliation transcends all other responsibilities and privileges that we have in following in Christ's footsteps, being crucified with him, yet living in him. Such an honor identifies us as being representatives of the Heavenly Father, doing his work and will during this age. (John 4:34) This is why the apostle admonishes that we are in no way to give offense, that the ministry be not blamed. Rather, Paul says, in everything we should prove ourselves as God's servants "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.—II Cor. 6:4-10

(Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 31)

CHARACTER QUALITIES NEEDED

This is how we establish, or prove, ourselves as ministers of God. This is an important part of our being crucified with Christ, yet living because of him, and is the underlying reason for all the scriptural admonitions to purity and righteous living. The Apostle Peter tells us, "If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Pet. 1:8) These qualities of character and mind will demand activity in the Lord's service. In Philippians 2:14-16, we read, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life." In I Peter 2:9, the Apostle Peter tells us, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." In these scriptures, Paul and Peter tell us that one of the important purposes of our calling is that we hold forth the wonderful light of truth.

The well-balanced consecrated believer is aware of the need for developing the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. These are also important as we are crucified, yet live, in Christ. All our efforts in the Lord's service would not be acceptable if they were not accompanied by love and the other Christlike graces. Furthermore, the fruits and graces of the Spirit alone will not benefit us ultimately, unless

they are accompanied by good works. Our development as well-balanced followers of Christ, however, must be done in the proper way. "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." (II Tim. 2:5) In the Lord's arrangement, he has designed that we will develop in the character of Christ largely through our activity in the service of the Truth, rather than in service to the many causes of the present world. The all-important purpose of our service is that by it we will put into practice the lessons taught by the experiences God permits us to have. If we do this, and do so in the proper way, directing our service toward the proper channels, we will develop love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and all the fruits and graces of the Spirit which will make our efforts to serve and please God acceptable.

BORN IN ZION

Jesus, in speaking to his disciples and to us, said, "Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." (John 4:35,36) It will be said of those who are faithful in their ministry of reconciliation, "This and that man was born in her [Zion]: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." (Ps. 87:5,6) These will be those spoken of as having faithfully been "beheaded [symbolically] for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God."—Rev. 20:4

Let us, as we strive to more fully develop the mind of Christ, seek to know and follow ever closer to his pattern of life, being crucified with him, that we may live with him. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”—Rom. 6:3-5 ■