

THE CROSS

Experienced
and
Revealed

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To read Paul's epistles is to discover that his greatest reason for writing always was to present Jesus Christ to his readers. Whatever else Paul wrote about, his main theme was always Christ and could be no other for He was Lord of his life; he was totally devoted to Him. In some of his epistles, side by side with this main theme Paul also presents the cross. Whenever he does so it is as his secondary theme only; it never takes first place; he does this because in his opinion next to his Lord there is no theme so important to mankind as the cross. Sometimes when speaking of the Lord Paul emphasizes this, deliberately uniting the Lord with His cross with a kind of phrase like this: 'Christ crucified'. He did this because he had discovered that the Lord and the cross are for ever joined, both by experience and by revelation he knew that in the plan of God the Christ and the cross always were joined. Jesus Christ the Son of God is the crucified Christ of God for all eternity. He is not now hanging on the cross bodily — that could never be or He would be eternally dead and totally ineffective; it is His bodily resurrection that makes the cross all the more important, for it proves the effectiveness of the spiritual cross.

Paul had much to say about the cross to the Galatians. It is not a very lengthy epistle but for its size this epistle has more of the cross in it than any other of his writings; into it he packed a vast amount of information about the crucifixion not so directly stated elsewhere in his own works or in anyone else's either. As may be expected, the Gospel writers have much to say about the cross: it is the focal point of their ministry; they were raised for this purpose. These tell us of Calvary and all the events which took place there and between them furnish all the world with all it needs to know about the historical cross and the resurrection that followed three days later. Unlike them, Paul, not being a disciple of Jesus Christ during His earthly day, was unable to write an eye-witness account of the crucifixion. Instead to him was granted the privilege of writing about the cross from a different viewpoint altogether. We are greatly indebted to him and to the Spirit who inspired him for all the wonderful things he revealed so full of truth and power. He said amazing things about the cross, unparalleled in the whole of the sacred writings; quite a lot of these are in this epistle.

One of the most astonishing of them is in the opening verse of the third chapter: 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?' At first glance this is one of the most astonishing statements in the whole Bible and appears to be a mistake. Jesus Christ was crucified in Palestine outside the walls of Jerusalem and not in Galatia. How then could Paul tell the Galatians that Christ was crucified before their eyes? He was not even crucified before Paul's eyes — he had not been at the crucifixion, he was not a believer in Christ when it happened and was certainly not among those who stood around or near the cross. Far from being a heartbroken disciple at that time he was an enemy of Christ; he thought then that Jesus was a Nazarene impostor, a religious charlatan. However, when he wrote his epistles he knew plenty of people who had been present at the execution; since his conversion they had become his friends.

It may be taken for granted that as often as he could he discussed with the rest of the apostles the details of that death and could have talked about them as they had been reported to him by eye-witnesses of the event, but he never did that. When he wrote to the Galatians or anyone else about the cross he was not recounting stories he had heard or facts he had gathered, reliable as they were; he was speaking of things he knew by personal experience. His sources of knowledge were twofold: (1) his own personal experience; (2) Christ's direct revelation and tuition. His claims in the epistle are likewise twofold: (1) 'I have been crucified with Christ'; (2) 'I certify you brethren that the gospel which was preached by me was not of man, but by revelation of Jesus Christ'. These are tremendous claims and they present the irreversible order of God for the impartation of all such knowledge: first he was crucified, then he was taught. Something happened to him and then it was explained to him; it is important for us to note that - the truth was only revealed to him following his experiential knowledge of the truth of the crucifixion. It becomes much clearer to us when we realize that the words 'evidently set forth', are better translated 'graphically described'. The meaning of the verse should be interpreted in the light of his earlier statement in the first chapter, 'it pleased God to reveal His Son in me'.

The fact of the crucifixion is indisputable, as both secular and sacred historians record, and seeing that so many trustworthy people had written of it, Paul did not regard it as part of his duty to describe the crucifixion scene again. Being a Roman he was familiar enough with the Roman method of capital punishment; it was practised worldwide throughout the Roman empire and he was a free-born member of that empire. His four friends, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, wrote copiously of Jesus Christ; they were ideally suited for the task. Two of them wrote from first-hand knowledge of events; one of them, it is thought, wrote at the dictation of Peter, who also had first-hand knowledge of the proceedings; the other wrote a thoroughly researched account gathered from many eye-witnesses. These four were inspired of God to write as they did according to the knowledge they had, and their combined testimony is authentic. That was not Paul's field of investigation or testimony. He wrote of the cross from experience, plus the revelation and explanation of it given to him by the Lord Himself.

It was this that enabled Paul to write so comprehensively about the cross. Not that he wrote about the cross itself very often or very much - by far his greatest writings were about the person who hung thereon and what He accomplished by it. The death Christ died there was what engrossed him so; Paul saw the cross in the same light as the Lord Himself saw it and spoke of it with Moses and Elijah on the mount. In discussion with them He spoke about His decease (Gr. exodus) which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Peter, James and John who were with the Lord at the time did not hear what He was saying; they did not know anything about it; they were asleep! They did not hear how He talked about His death, what they heard were His later declarations about being delivered into the hands of men and being crucified; they heard about the cross and eventually saw it, but they never saw His accomplishments thereby. What those apostles missed through sleep then Paul received by direct revelation later and, being better informed than they, he talked about the accomplishments of the death of that cross rather than the details of the cross of that death. He thoroughly understood what they found to be such a mystery at the time. Doubtless they too came to understanding about it eventually, but though they did so, they never wrote about it as did Paul.

Because Paul understood it so well he was able to preach and write of it with clarity and great understanding. To the Corinthians he set down in masterly fashion God's philosophy of the death of Christ. It was not the philosophy of this world though, he made it clear to them that by the cross of Christ God had made foolish the wisdom of this world. The basis of all his reasoning and consequent preaching was the Logos of the cross, but it made nonsense to the princes of this world. Man's philosophies are not built upon the principle of death and resurrection; it is the antithesis of all worldly wisdom and He did it purposely that He may introduce His own eternal wisdom into men's thinking. The illuminated Paul wrote: 'we thus judge that if one died for all, then (by that act) all died, and (we also judge) that he died for all (so) that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again'. It is a very matter-of-fact premise on which to approach all life and a most penetrating one too. How very true it is, a revelation indeed; but this wisdom is hidden from men, it is nowhere to be found in the whole of Greek Philosophy.

So Great a Death

To be a God of wisdom God has to be a God of reason too. This is why He revealed to Paul: (1) the reasoning behind the cross; (2) the reason for the cross; and (3) the power of the cross. This revelation became the fundament of Paul's gospel, it furnished him with the ground of all his arguments; by it he was intellectually equipped to stand among his equals and with solid reason state the gospel of total salvation for the whole of mankind. He did not lay a foundation for universalism though; he thoroughly grasped the fact that though all men died when Christ died, all men did not come alive when Christ was made alive. In heart-conviction he fearlessly stated truth so that God's methods should be understood by all who wish to know them. He saw what few men have seen, namely that by Christ God dealt with the entirety of man. What Pilate said to the people at Christ's trial was perhaps more perceptive than most men think; when "Jesus came forth wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe Pilate saith unto them, 'Behold, the man. "Crucify Him, crucify Him"' they said. It filled their hearts, so He who alone was the real, complete man was crucified.

To God that was the important thing - the man had to die. It was all-important to the enraged mob of religious fanatics - they wanted the man dead, but it was more important to God that He died; God wanted the man dead. He wanted Him dead for other reasons than the ones for which they wanted it, far greater reasons, in fact the greatest of all reasons, the most important reasons in the universe, reasons important to God. Beyond human concepts or understanding, even to the initiated — those who are made privy to the secret and the mystery of it — God wanted Him dead. Beside Christ none of those who were included in the crucifixion or who witnessed it had any conception of what was most truly afoot in the invisible world of spirit that day. They could not see what God was doing. They did not know what had to be done, hence the folly of trying to formulate opinion. Most probably this was one of the reasons why darkness descended on the scene and covered the people and the whole land for three long hours. It held while Christ endured the agonies entailed in changing the source and course of man's spiritual life and the sources and laws of human heredity.

Men could not see the love in the heart of the Saviour. God was showing them that they could not see; they were blind, they had always been blind, they had never understood. Everything was beyond them in a different sphere, a world into which

they could not enter. Men had no knowledge of what was going on, they were groping in the dark. Paul had been one of that company once, but now he knew; for our benefit by the election of God he was given to understand. When the glorified Christ revealed it to him he saw it all as clear as daylight. In the world's great darkness at the cross that day God was resolving His own problems and man's problems too. These problems were not problems to God in the same sense as they were problems to man; they never overwhelmed Him or left Him puzzled to know what to do about them, but they were nevertheless great and troublous things to Him. Since before the creation of the world (and since the creation of the world when troubles had arisen in Eden) these had remained with Him unresolved and unresolvable throughout history until Golgotha. That is why there was a Golgotha - there had to be a Golgotha so that God could resolve them all.

In order to settle the matter once for all God had to have a man, for it was with man that His greatest trouble and heartbreak lay; God made Adam, he was His and Satan slew him. Satan put Adam to death. Not by crucifixion, nor by stoning; it was not a physical thing at all; it was a death more sinister and deadly than that and utterly irremediable by man. The effects of that death were terrible to contemplate in the immediate, for it was a living death — Adam became a living, breathing death. But, bad as that was, it was as nothing compared with the long-term effects of that death; it was corrosive, corrupting, spreading death, all the more insidious and dangerous because it was invisible and undetectable, and so contagious. Adam was such a powerful person, he was so potent that when it happened to him all mankind died with him; when Satan put Adam to death he put us all to death, as Paul saw and said - 'death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'.

When God made Adam He made us all; all mankind was in him. Proof of this is that one day He put Adam to sleep and took a rib from him and of it made another person; she was in him and had been in him all the time. God made her in him first and then from his substance made Eve. Her inward substance and shape was in him all the time. When she first appeared to Adam in outward form he called her 'Isha', meaning taken from within man' (Ish); except that she was a woman, when made she was exactly like Adam. In nature, character, personality and potential she was the same; God's purpose in making her in female form and potential was that from within her others like them both may be begotten from Adam; the whole race of men was in them right at the beginning. Since the fall of Adam and Eve the whole human race has been dead; in effect we all died then — we were put to death by Satan when he put death into Adam, even though we had not been born and had not personally sinned we died with Adam. We died in Adam when, through his sin, he lost spiritual contact with God.

Adam lost the power to beget righteous children, all the potential governing the spiritual life and possibilities of his seed was changed then. He became a power for evil and not for good from that moment. That is why Paul said, 'In Adam all die'; thank God he also wrote 'In Christ shall all be made alive', thus completing the couplet. He was speaking of spiritual states and potential, not guaranteeing life universal for all mankind, for we are all sinners by nature and quite dead. We are not dead because we have sinned, on the contrary we sin because we are dead; death is the result of sin and sin is the evidence of that death. The fact that we have sinned proves that death has passed upon us. We sin because we are cut off from God and exist in a state of death. Sin is death's corruption.

This is the reason why the Lord Jesus, when on earth, never condemned sinners. God says He did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world and Jesus never once did it. He came that the world through Him might be saved. He loved to say things like 'neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more'. He never once directly called a man a sinner; it would have been true if He had done so — He could have called every man a sinner, but because He was the perfectly sinless one He never did so. Marvellous as this is in our eyes, the reason for it lies in His very sinless perfection, He was too good to say such things to men. He knew that if He had not been born the sinless Son of God He too would have been a sinner. A man cannot be blamed for being a sinner; we sin because it is natural for us to sin; He sinned not, because it was not natural to Him to sin. He had not the nature to sin, He did not desire to sin, He never chose to sin, He could not be tempted to sin, He kept Himself from sin, He would not succumb to sin and finally He expiated sin; He is Adam the second. Surely in spiritual life and power He is Adam the first.

He was the last Adam also. The first Adam was made perfect by a perfect Creator in a perfect creation, the last Adam was made perfect in an imperfect environment; the first Adam succumbed to sin through temptation, the last Adam resisted sin unto blood and was made even more perfect through suffering. The first Adam was of the earth - earthy, the last Adam was the Lord from heaven, a life-giving spirit. There were two Adams. Jesus Christ was not in Adam — He was in God and came forth from the Father. As God chose to put all men in Adam, so He chose to put all His sons in Christ and He did so potentially before He put us all in Adam. The first Adam was put to death by Satan, the last Adam was put to death by God, and as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. The fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead is the guarantee that every man shall rise from the dead; every man's experience was in some measure chosen in Christ.

We all, whether saved or unsaved, were for some purpose and to some degree included in Christ. God determined everything and everybody by His Son. Not every person was chosen in Him as is the Church (called in scripture the elect of God) but nothing was made apart from Christ. All things and persons were made by Him and for Him; all things consist by Him, they have done so from the beginning and still do to this very moment. He is before all things; in all things He has the pre-eminence, He is the firstborn of every creature, He is also the firstborn from the dead. 'In Him we (all) live and move and have our being and He is the Saviour (Preserver) of all men, especially of them that believe'. There is no exception to this, nor can there ever be - the whole creation, animate and inanimate, material and spiritual, celestial and temporal, was cast in one mould and that mould is Christ.

Everything was chosen and settled either in or in relationship to Christ before the foundation of the world. Each according to its order and in its time was designed to be in and of and by and through Him. Even sin itself could only exist as being somehow associated with Him; it was not in Him as of divine nature, nor yet as of human nature - it did not originate with Him, indeed it was entirely foreign to Him, but it became His by gift of God at Calvary. Satan could not give Him sin, man could not give Him sin, He would accept it of neither, but He accepted it from His God and Father; so really did He accept it that He became it - 'He was made sin for us'. He who knew no sin, who could not be made to sin, was made sin by His Father whom He loved; God made Him the horrible nature and ugliest form and worst manifestation of sin. The Man was made the man of sin, the best and highest became the worst and lowest, and

because the second Adam took this nature, form and personality of the first Adam, God slew Him. The devil could not kill Him, man could not kill Him, sin could not kill Him, Rome could not kill Him, Jewry could not kill Him, civil law could not kill Him, ecclesiastical law could not kill Him, yet He had to be killed. Only God could kill Him, so He did - He had to.

This is precisely why God made a second man on the earth; it just could not be that Satan should have the final word about anything. When Christ was slain for us it was not as a result of a contest between God and man, though on the surface it seemed like it; it was the outcome of the conflict between God and Satan. In Eden Satan took the initiative, on the cross God took the initiative; indeed He did so at Nazareth by approaching Mary. Both God and Satan started with virginity, Adam was virgin, so was Christ. Adam lost his virginity, Christ maintained His, Adam became old Adam, Christ is the new Adam; He was also the last Adam. There has not been another Adam since Christ, Adam is a beginning: Christ is The Beginning: old Adam has ceased, God who made him slew him, Christ lives and continues for ever.

This is what lay behind Christ's mysterious words, 'and I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me', signifying what death He would die. All men were drawn unto Him on the cross and slain there; they were either put to eternal death as being in old Adam or presented to God as being made new in the new Adam: by His greatness and glory all were in Him. Whether in condemnation or salvation God ended the race there. Every man since, though born of the same humanity and in the same physical form as first Adam, is now totally responsible to the superior second Adam. This has far-reaching implications and effects, altogether too numerous to be dealt with here. Among the greatest of these is the implementation of God's intention that no man shall go to hell for first Adam's sin - men will die eternally only if they reject Christ. Adam will have to answer for his own sin and so will everyone else; it is comforting to know that no man is responsible for another man's sin; with the exception of Jesus Christ each one is answerable to God for his or her own sin. Herein lies the wonder of Christ — He was made responsible for the sin of the world, first Adam bore the responsibility and guilt of bringing sin into the world, second Adam bore the responsibility and glory of taking it out.

All men became sinners by Adam's sin; because of that sin they also had the death sentence passed upon them. This death sentence is not sentence to eternal damnation in Gehenna, it is sentence to the death of being cut off from God. Of itself this death, being the logical result of the act of disobedience against God, manifested itself in and still consists in a state of unawareness of God's presence or even of His existence and a complete inability to do His will or even to desire Him. This is the result of the compound sins of generations of men and it has confused the real issue between Satan and man, against God; it has also brought the world to its present state of corruption. The proof that death has passed on all men is that all men have sinned and that most men still do; as sin brought in death and death reigns over all, so sovereign death brought compulsive unavoidable sinning to all. Without Christ it is impossible for man to exist without being a consistent sinner.

Both first and second Adam were sovereigns. To be born of first Adam's line meant that a person must sin because that was what was involved in Adam's transaction with Satan - it was a sovereign act affecting heredity; he made a choice and conformed the race. To be born of second Adam's line means that a person need not sin because this

is what was involved in Christ's transaction with God; He also made a race-conforming choice. Adam need not have sinned any more than Christ needed to sin. Both Adam (originally) and Christ were free from sin; Adam was not compelled to sin, he was not compelled to be sinless either. When he sinned no-one made him do it, he did it quite voluntarily; satan breached his obedient love for God through his fleshly love for his wife. He was vulnerable and weak through love, and an incorrect evaluation of the seeming results of her sin caused him to sin with her. The results of his sin have continued, unavoidable and utterly disastrous, all the worse because the sin was an entirely voluntary choice. Likewise with Jesus, no-one compelled Him to remain sinless; when satan tempted Him He chose not to sin. His strength was His love for God and His Church; His correct evaluation of the immediate, as well as the eternal results of sin, made Him choose aright and the results of His unwavering choice are blessings incalculable. The effects of these two men's lives and deaths upon the lives and deaths and destinies of all mankind are totally immeasurable. God have mercy upon us all.

From all this two facts emerge, one of which we will consider here: (1) all men of first Adam's line are born free from righteousness and bound to sin; (2) all men of second Adam's line are born free from sin and able to live in righteousness. The first of these points we considered earlier as it is exemplified in Paul and set out for us in scripture; we will not return to it here. The second we will spend time on here, for it holds good for every child of God as well as Paul. From the moment he is born again no child of God is bound to sin; on the other hand neither is he bound not to sin, neither is he forced to live in righteousness all his days. He has been born of God's purpose that He should sin no more, but as with Adam (both first and second) he is left free to sin if he chooses. The new birth is in sinlessness, it consists in the re-creation of the spirit and the reclamation of the soul and the reformation of the whole moral nature. At that moment the will is unshackled, the body is quickened and newness of life commences, the man is redeemed and set free to obey God. He is not made free from sin for any other reason; this is God's love-gift to him, it is eternal life. But he is not forced to obey God, God does not want slavery in His kingdom — everything must be done voluntarily. Because this is so the possibility that a man may lapse back into the old Adam state at any time remains; if he does not

obey God it is inevitable that he will do so. This cannot happen accidentally — sin is not inevitable for the saint. Being made free from sin he can keep free from sin by choice. A phrase borrowed from Oswald Chambers puts this more perfectly: he says that growth is by 'a series of moral choices'; this is why in regeneration a man's whole moral nature is renewed.

God makes men free; the only bond God forges round a man is holy love. God wants the love of free moral agents; for this a man must bind himself to God in faithfulness as Christ did — this alone is freedom. Every man wishing to do this will receive grace from God to do it; this is man's righteousness. This is the reason why Christ's righteousness is first imputed and then imparted to men. The righteousness of the man Jesus hinged upon His moral choices. He chose to obey God. This basic original and accumulated righteousness of Christ became the ground of our salvation. The accumulated righteousness of His constant obedience as a man — even unto death — added to His innate righteousness as being one of the persons of God, secured regeneration for us.

The reason lying deep, almost like a compulsion, in the heart of God for the cross was this — the death of man — it was an absolute necessity. The old man, first Adam, must be put to death, so the new man Jesus, the second and last Adam, was put to death as that man; this was the basic necessity. Other great, far-reaching things took place on the cross also, things affecting angels and devils, things of eternal consequence, but none more vital for God and man than this. To God the death of His Son on the cross was the act and the moment and the point of resolution of all mysteries of iniquity, mysteries beyond the comprehension of man's mind. God needed to be justified and exonerated, shown to be right about His dealings with angels and men over sin. By the cross God was justified and because God was justified man was justified also, all happened at once. At the cross the sentence of death was carried out to the full in all realms of morality far beyond man's knowledge.

By the mercy and grace of God something of the vastness and terrors and power of this death were made known to Paul, who sought to compress its meaning into a phrase and express it in these words, 'so great a death'. So great was this death that the apostle found himself in constant need of deliverance from some aspects and degrees of it. With what gratitude he spoke of having been delivered from it in the past, with what joy he testified to being delivered from it in the present and with what confidence he declared he would be delivered from it in the future. He once wrote to the Ephesians about this death saying 'ye were dead in trespasses and sins'. He was not then so much referring to death itself as to its environs, that in which it consists and those things that are related to and associated with it, in much the same way as we associate death with graveclothes and a cemetery and a grave where death is placed. The grave is not death, it is where the dead are buried, the place of the dead; even so, trespasses and sins are not death but in this connection may be thought of as graveclothes.

A living man can put on and wear graveclothes if he pleases; a man does not need to be dead in order to wear the clothes of the dead: it would be unusual and unexpected, in fact distasteful, but not impossible. Possible though it is however, all who beheld it would at best think it a joke or at worst think such a person was unhinged or most peculiar, or more charitably, ill. There is a sad spiritual lesson to be learned here though — many a man who has honestly been given life by the Lord. Jesus is still wearing graveclothes. He has turned back to his old sins and is trespassing against the law of Christ, forging habits and binding strong bands around himself greater and stronger than the chains which bound Legion and from which, unlike Legion, he cannot break free. But because he is a son he can turn again to Christ with all his heart and find repentance and forgiveness and. cleansing and. liberty from the Lord. Christ will then in love restore him to his first condition of life, fill him with the Spirit, clothe him with the garments of salvation and walk with Him in the light. But Paul was not speaking of this when he spoke of death. He was speaking of the deadness and the sheer desolation of it, its total ignorance of God and good. Oh, the terrible power of death, so great that a dead person is absolutely unconscious of the state he is in. He exists in this world cut off from God and does not know it until he departs from it to the place of the departed and the further-removed from which there is no return. There he may only anticipate without hope the second death to which he must be despatched, together with all those who, like him, have rejected Christ.

So universal and great is this death that Paul himself had no knowledge of it until he was delivered from it. It was this that made him so aware of its vastness. He had had

no idea of his need, he had been dead, utterly dead, he said, and had not known it. When he did. discover he was dead it was frightening; he was devastated. He had lived a Pharisee, and as touching the righteousness of the law had been perfect — faultless even — yet he had been dead. He had thought he was alive but he had never known life; except in the will of God in Christ he had never existed even. He once wrote of his experience of self-discovery and of the condition of his existence under law in death. He said he had once been alive (presumably from his birth) without the law, and had existed in that condition until the law came — at what age that happened he does not say, probably from bar-mitzvah onwards — but when the law came he died, he said. He claimed that it was the coming of (the realization of) the law and what it was saying that slew him. Until then sin had lain in him dead, but when the law really reached the true condition of sin in him it revived, and rebelled and he died.

Sin is like the light which Jesus says is darkness, great darkness, how great none but He can tell. Sin in a man can be as holiness and righteousness, this is its greatest power. Paul seems to be referring to a personal experience remarkably similar to the dispensational racial experience of Israel, which is not surprising; God seemed to raise up that nation in order to demonstrate in it every feature of human possibility. Upon consideration this is to be expected, for a nation is only made up of individuals so it must be the sum total of all the individuals in it. More than that, since the whole wide world of men is the sum total of every nation in it, what is basically true of every individual is true of the whole world. Sin came into this world 'as by one man' long before Israel's birth as a nation. Adam was not the first person in the world to sin; tragically he was neither the only one, nor yet the last person to sin in the world. Adam was the second person to commit sin in this world; the very first sin committed in this world was his wife Eve's.

Eve sinned by listening to satan's blandishments, she succumbed to him, believed his lies, partook of the fruit of the tree and gave to Adam who also ate and joined in the transgression. The eyes of them both were immediately opened and they knew they were naked. They had always been naked but until that moment they were not conscious of it. They did not know what nakedness was for it was natural to them and proper. Until that moment presumably the only clothing they had was inward and spiritual; they were naked and unashamed and had lived in that manner outwardly from the beginning. But when they partook of the forbidden tree they knew they were naked and were immediately ashamed. Feeling totally exposed and not understanding why, they contrived some form of clothing for themselves to hide their bodies from each other; they were afraid and when God came into the garden they were so overwhelmed with guilt that they hid from Him. It may be true that until then they had been clothed with ignorance, certainly they had existed in innocence before the Lord and each other. It is also certain that they had lived in righteousness, not the righteousness of the law of Moses, nor yet the righteousness of justification, for Moses had not then written the law, nor had justification been wrought. Their righteousness had been the righteousness of obedience. Until they disobeyed God by eating of the tree there had been no righteousness in them; theirs was the unconscious righteousness of faith, the unselfconscious state of natural life.

The risen Christ had a revelation; God gave it to Him. It was so wonderful that He chose to make it known, so He approached His servant, the apostle John, with this intention and gave him a commandment to pass it on to us. John, being an obedient servant, agreed and disposed himself to his Lord's will. Therefore, pictorially by

vision and directly by dictation, the Lord made known some of the dearest secrets of His heart. One of the things He disclosed to John was that righteousness is like fine linen and should be regarded by us as the raiment He gives to the bride and wife of His heart. It is glorious clothing, He wore it Himself when He hung on the cross. Men would not have believed it, for they did not see it; in their eyes He hung there naked; they had stripped Him and taken away His clothes from Him and nailed Him to the tree, which became at once the tree of the knowledge of evil and death and the tree of good and life. He hung on it naked and unashamed; He did not care what men saw or thought. He had long been dead to that. In the eyes of God He was clothed with an inward clothing that needed nothing outward to cover it. His vesture was all the more glorious because it was dipped in blood — His own righteousness, fine and white, clothed Him there, but it was red; His finest white linen was dyed with His own blood, it was perfect in God's sight. Even when He was made sin on the cross the second and last Adam never lost His righteousness; His death itself was righteousness to Him, and through it He was made righteousness to us. How finely it was woven that day, a fine web of wondrous virtue, whiter than snow, to be imputed to us and imparted to us that we may be clothed with it. O how gladly we wrap ourselves in it! Blessed Spirit robe us in it to suit that heavenly bridegroom, for we love Him. Through Him living righteousness came into the world before, but Adam lost it.

Sin came into the world of men by Adam. He could have prevented it from passing into mankind if he had wished even though he was not the only person to sin on the earth. Eve was not responsible for bringing sin into the world of mankind of herself. She couldn't simply because, being one person and a woman, it was impossible; she could only bear children, she could not beget them. Unless Adam had sinned with her, her misdeed could not have been passed on to other human beings. Adam could have prevented it if he had wished, but in his heart he would not divorce from her, but chose to disobey God and sin with her. It was in this agreement together that sin was passed on — first to his children and thence to the whole race of men. Part of the tragedy of the incoming of sin (perhaps the most tragic part) was the death that came in with it and by it. By Adam's transgression the race became a race of sinners, even though none since has sinned in exactly the same way as he. The whole of mankind is exceedingly sinful, but being dead does not know it; as Paul says, all outside of Christ are without understanding, past feeling and alienated from the life of God — that is death.

So it was that, in common with all men, sin lay undiscovered in Paul's life; as it was in the race as a whole so it was with him as an individual, and with the exception of Jesus Christ so it is with every other individual. Sin never came to light in the race until God gave the law to Israel via Moses; it was there and had been from the beginning, affecting everyone since Adam, but it lay dead in the sense that it was not recognized for what it was, therefore it was not imputed to anyone because everyone was unconscious of its sinfulness in God's sight. Adam's original sin and consequent death was passed on to everyone as a nature to sin and a state of death. Although God has never imputed Adam's sin to anyone else, He could not prevent it from influencing everyone else, even though He knew they would be unaware of the reason for their deadness and would not know they were dead. Death is so universal and so great that even Job, who became a mighty man of God, did not at first know where or how to find Him.

Sin took on many forms and so did death. Perhaps there are as many forms of death as there are expressions of the nature of sin. In another context and with a different emphasis and meaning Paul once said he was in deaths oft. As a result men were in complete ignorance of God and of what He wanted. Strangely enough this death and unawareness is often accompanied by a desire to know God or by becoming a religious zealot. This may be one of its deadliest forms. Atheism is not the only form of death, though it is certainly the suicide of fools. Atheism is the snobbishness of intellectualism, the last stronghold of ignorance, the empty boasting of sin. Thank God not all have been so stupid and from the beginning it was not so. Here and there throughout history men have appeared to whom God revealed Himself or who reached out and found Him, but they were very few. Men have mostly been careless of their state and very defiant and critical of God. So eventually the Lord raised up Moses, that by him He should reveal Himself to men and give them His law and expose sin in some measure. Saul of Tarsus was one of these. The law came to him with such power that he died under it for by it he discovered sin, what it really is. He says these things about the law and sin — 'by the law is the knowledge of sin', 'by the commandment sin became exceedingly sinful', 'by the law sin was enhanced', 'the strength of sin is the law', 'when the commandment (law) came sin revived and I died', 'sin working death in me by that which is good'.

As in Adam, so in Paul, sin worked death. The difference between them lay only in this - Adam knew what sin was and Paul did not, even though he knew the law. Saul of Tarsus could boast that as touching the law he was blameless, yet he discovered he was the chief of sinners. The exceeding sinfulness of the nature and working of sin is revealed in that it used the law, which was spiritual and good, to destroy its victims. We may thank God the age of law is past; but although that is true, the danger is not past. In this present age sin, which once used the law, now uses the gospel to slay its victims. The law and the gospel were not given for this reason though, God gave them to men, that by them He may expose sin and bring His salvation to hearts and lives. When the law really came with power to Paul's heart it brought light to him; it also brought tragedy. For the first time he saw what sin really was and as a result of it promptly died in hopelessness and despair; death was compounded in him and he was confounded by it: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?' he wailed. When he saw sin as God sees it, sin appeared to him as a body with as many members as there are forms of sin and that body was his self. Confused he groped his way through endless realms of darkness but could find no permanent relief, even though he contrived mental escape by delighting in the law. Sin was in his members, it was inescapable and unbreakable law in him. He had discovered himself to be a totally sinful and utterly wretched man. Then Christ, the original Light, came to him and brought him hope.

Paul was not saved by hearing a gospel message and responding to an appeal, he learned the gospel from Jesus Christ after he was saved. He was saved by Christ coming in blinding light to him on the Damascus road. In the glory of that light Christ slew him in the dust outside the city wall. Broken and humbled he was led by the hand into the city to the street called straight and there he was buried for three days. Praying there without sight in the dark, he lay before God and on the third day God raised him up by the same Spirit by which He raised Christ from the dead. Paul was raised, given sight and filled with the Holy Ghost in one sovereign move of God; Paul was born again. That happened to him when Christ 'came' to him. When the law 'came' to him it slew him and left him dead. The law was given by Moses but could

not give life to those who received it; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ who gives life to all who receive Him. The law came into the world thousands of years before Paul was born; Christ Jesus came into the world possibly about the same time he was born, but neither came to him personally at that time. When and where the law came personally to him we do not know, likewise we do not know precisely when or where Christ came to him, but we do know it was at a precise time and place on the Damascus road. It was God's time for him, sin and death left him, he lived.

Looking back on it all with the light of revelation shining upon it and under the instruction of Christ he saw everything that had happened to him then in clearest reality. He had been a serpent, like his great fellow-apostle Peter he had been a vessel of sin, a spiritual configuration and human manifestation of satan, the devil. That is why it had been necessary for God to smite him down into the dust. He belonged there, he had been persecuting Christ and His Church. Praise God it was only a temporary measure and not eternal judgement. He was not smitten down into the dust of physical death and put into God's prison for rebellious spirits to await final judgement and the inevitable fires of Gehenna. He deserved that as we all did, but Jesus saved him despite the fact that he had been rebelling and kicking against the goads for a long time. Paul became a very grateful man and a most devoted servant of Jesus Christ. Just when he was caught up to the third heaven and what he saw and heard there we do not know, but he has left on record an amazing Gospel of grace and love, a precious testimony and a unique revelation of eternal truth.

As well as his understanding of the death of our Lord Jesus, it is his view of the events surrounding the cross also that is so arresting. Almost certainly he was not present at any of the several trials to which the civil and religious authorities put Christ, yet he spoke of the death sentence passed upon Him as did no other. Each of the four biographers of Jesus records the historic events with varying detail, but none speaks of a death sentence in so many words. They do record that Pilate delivered Him to be crucified and that he wrote a superscription and had it placed on His cross, but death sentence, no. No man passed sentence of death upon Him as sentencing is known today when a man receives his just deserts for crimes committed. Jesus never committed any crimes; how then could any man formally sentence Him? Sentence of death was passed upon Him by God His Father in Gethsemane precisely for that reason. He had been alone when the sentencing took place; no man witnessed it, even the most select of the apostles were asleep. Whatever it was God said to Him we do not know. His words are not recorded, but Christ's are: 'if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done'. The agreement was perfect, the sentence had been passed, He arose from His place and presented Himself to His captors for its execution.

Paul saw what happened in this spiritual court of appeal and understood it perfectly and fully grasped its meaning and implications for men. He saw that it was a sentence of death for the whole human race and accordingly received it to himself. His written testimony is that he had this sentence of death in himself and that the purpose of it was that he should not trust in himself but in God which raiseth the dead. That is precisely the same attitude in which Jesus faced His death; He did so with complete confidence. It is recorded that He often said He would rise again from the dead. He knew that if He first accepted the death sentence and went to death without murmuring God would raise Him up again. It was an accepted fact of logic and of spiritual law that except He died there could be no resurrection; resurrection-life can

only be experienced after death. When the man Christ Jesus went to death He did so trusting His God to raise Him again. Praise God He did not refuse to accept the sentence of death in Himself but received it; if He had not done so there could have been no gospel. The consequences of that reception were devastating to Him, but He did not for that reason refuse to accept the cup from His Father's hand. He submitted to His Father, accepted the sentence, received the cup and drank it to the dregs.

Paul saw all this, he also saw that unless he too accepted, received and drank in the sentence of death and experienced it himself he could not preach the gospel in its regenerating fulness. It is an amazing thing, but absolutely true, that even Christ Himself could not preach the gospel in all its fulness while He was here on earth and neither could any of His followers at that time. He could talk of the cross and of taking up the cross and of bearing the cross, but He could not talk of the death of the cross, or of the blood of the cross, for He had not yet hung on it and shed His blood; during His lifetime on earth the gospel was limited. The reason for this was that there had been no cross as yet, in the sense and meaning we understand it the cross did not exist. In the nature of the case He could give no direct teaching about the cross and its purpose and power before He hung on it; had He attempted to do so it would have been meaningless to His hearers. Worse still it would have been entirely out of place, and being so glaringly out of order it would have appeared quite farcical to the many earnest souls who had left all to follow Him. He therefore confined Himself to teaching them elements of truth about it which they could more easily understand and assimilate and reserved the most vital teaching of the cross till He should rise from the dead. It was necessary He should do so lest illogic destroy all hope of credibility.

It was equally necessary that when He rose from the dead He should set forth the mystery and true purpose of the cross which was not revealed during His lifetime and which none of the four evangelists included in their biographical works. He knew that unless He did so the bulk of His teaching prior to the cross could have no present-day application. Because all His words are vital to us He raised up Luke to write two major works, each complementary to the other; the first is a record of His own birth and history called a Gospel and the second is a record of the birth of the Church and its earliest history, called the Acts of the Apostles. Luke commences his second work with these words: 'The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which he was taken up'. It is at once clear that while on earth Jesus had only commenced His teachings and that, having risen from the dead, He took up and continued to teach His apostles again. This time He began to teach them the things He had left unsaid when He died, things He had to finish by that death and which therefore could not have been said before: chief among these was the vast fulness of truth related to His cross and death.

In His wisdom and because of its very nature the Lord selected for this a man who did not belong to the original group of apostles, in fact a man who had dedicated his life to the destruction of His church. He was a man of many parts and great accomplishments who was both a true-born Hebrew and a free-born Roman and a scholar; his name was Saul of Tarsus. Perhaps above all he was chosen because he was a zealot. The story of his conversion and how, by grace, he was made a son of God is now famous in history. To this man the Lord committed the bulk of His further teaching about the cross that he should commit it to men. This he did first by his life, then by preaching and ultimately in writing. Paul regarded this as a most sacred commission and he gave himself to it without ceasing for the rest of his days.

Disappointingly some of his writings have been lost; at least three of his epistles are missing, but sufficient material has been preserved for us to make an assessment of the man and the matchless grasp he had of the truth and power of the cross of Christ. What a wonderful soul he was and what an apt scholar he proved to be; the Lord found just the right man.

Doubtless others of the apostolic band were just as quick to understand as Paul was, but to none of them did Christ grant the honour of writing His further teachings about His cross. That they all equally understood its power and glory cannot be doubted; only this could have qualified them for continued apostleship. They had witnessed the Lord's crucifixion, yet for reasons best known to Himself the Lord did not commission them to write of the cross in the same way or in such breadth and length and depth and height as Paul did. It might seem appropriate to us that they who saw the actual cross and were witnesses of everything that went on there and saw the death and burial of the Lord should have been entrusted with the further ministry, but it was not to be. The Lord decided otherwise; He raised up Paul to do it.

Why the Lord did this is not for us to question; His sovereignty and wisdom are paramount in His kingdom, but it is not beyond our power to think of reasons why perhaps He should do so. Saul of Tarsus was a fanatical Hebrew, a bigoted religionist and a nationalist of the highest order; he was famous in Jewry. His hatred of Christ and the Church and his persecutions of the churches were carried out with such venom and fervour that throughout the Christian world his name became linked with imprisonment and death. Saul of Tarsus was a tool of Satan, a human dragon breathing out threatening and slaughter, a most injurious man. He was a willing and enthusiastic observer, if not the instigator and engineer, of the death of Stephen. By Roman law it was an illegal death: all those Jews who stoned Stephen knew they should not have done it, but such was their hatred of Christ and those who loved Him that they defied Rome and took the law into their own hands; it was plain murder and Paul knew it and delighted in it. However such was the mercy and grace of God that He took up this man so full of misplaced love and zeal and made him one of the most glorious lovers of Christ and His Church of all time. Paul was a rabid nationalist who believed in everything Jewish, their method of capital punishment by stoning included. Then when God got hold of him He made him the chief preacher and expositor of the Roman method of capital punishment; it was a complete reversal of Paul's thinking. He knew that God had ordained execution by stoning so that His anger against sin should be fully expressed by the whole nation. Stoning was not only a method of execution, it was also a symbol of the identification which existed between Himself and His people. Paul knew that crucifixion did not imply that; God held back His Son for the cross because it exhibited foreign anger against Christ, God's anger against sin and the sinner. To Paul's mind the change of method signified the commencement of a new era; the thoroughly new man had a thoroughly new message.

Paul knew all about the literal crucifixion of Christ; he had known of it when he was Saul the persecutor; he had most probably witnessed many other crucifixions similar to it, the details were familiar enough to him. What he did not know were the spiritual meanings of the Lord's death; the mysteries of the cross were as unknown to him as to any other until the time Jesus took him into His confidence and revealed these things to him. Just when the Lord included him into His school we do not know, but the evidence that He did so is clearly shown in the epistle he wrote to the Galatians. In this letter he certifies the brethren that the gospel he preached he received directly

from the Lord; he was not taught it by man, he said, neither did he receive it from man. Just how long it took the Lord to impart the revelation we are not told — perhaps as long as it took Him to give the old covenant to Moses at Sinai. This gospel of Paul's is the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ delivered by Him to His apostle following His ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In itself it is a miracle of some magnitude.

In this epistle he discloses the two main lines of his revelation: the one concerns the death and work of the cross of Christ and the other the coming and ministry of the Holy Spirit. He includes other things in the epistle as well, because they are necessary to the Galatians and incidental to life, but everything is related to the central themes which comprise the main body of truth being imparted. All the apostle says about the law and circumcision and grace and other gospel truths is developed from this standpoint. The central passage correlating these two themes is first introduced by the statement, 'Jesus Christ was evidently set forth crucified among you and then followed by the question, 'received ye the Spirit?' The heart of God and the heart of the revelation and the heart of the gospel is revealed at the heart of the epistle. This is the second of the seven references to the cross he makes in the epistle. Set out in their order of appearance these are as follows:

- [1. The cross and the crucifixion of self.](#)
- [2. The cross and the giving of the Spirit.](#)
- [3. The cross and the redemption from the curse.](#)
- [4. The cross and the scandal.](#)
- [5. The cross and the crucifixion of the flesh.](#)
- [6. The cross and circumcision.](#)
- [7. The cross and the crucifixion of the world.](#)

It is a fact little short of amazing that so great an amount of information about the cross should be packed into so brief an epistle. Even though some of Paul's writings are more than twice as long, in no other epistle is the cross mentioned so many times. This achievement is the more outstanding and most significant also when it is realized that this is possibly the very first epistle Paul wrote.

1. The Cross and the Crucifixion of Self.

If it is indeed true that this is his first epistle, it is evident that Paul believed the cross to be of prime importance and was convinced that before attempting to write anything else he should expound the truth and power of the cross first and foremost. Not only so, it would also appear that the Holy Spirit by whom Christ taught and inspired the apostle must likewise have considered he should write on this theme first. Of course the Galatians needed to be taught the truth of the cross, but so did all the other churches as we shall see, but to no other did he write on the subject in such detail or at similar length as to the Galatians. We may then perhaps, after reading the epistle, agree with the apostle and the Holy Spirit that all spiritual problems are related to the cross and were dealt with there and proceed further to the logical conclusion that all man's basic personal needs can be resolved by personal experience of crucifixion.

This is the most enlightening thing about Paul's introduction to the cross. If this is his very first excursion into apostolic writing then the very first thing he wrote about the cross was 'I am crucified with Christ;' how distinctly individual. Even though this whole epistle is about the virtues and glories of Christ and the cross, this is an amazing statement with which to open a written ministry, quite unique in fact. With such an approach it must become obvious to all that Paul's whole teaching about the cross is frankly subjective.

In this he differs completely from the four Gospel writers; they present the cross and the consequent resurrection objectively. Their business is to point out to us historical facts; it is the major reason for their writings. The only hint of subjectivity in all their accounts is the one statement of Jesus that His disciples must take up the cross and follow Him. He was most insistent about this and in this sense every man must make the cross his own. Even so, by the Lord's very language it is referred to as an outward cross and although it is personal, it is not the intimate cross that Paul declared. This is not because the Lord Jesus did not want it to be so personal to man in His day; He did, but He knew He could not talk to His disciples about being crucified with Him without posing serious problems to their minds; that He would not do. His teaching was masterly, His logic was impeccable, but they were no greater than His love.

In the upper room just before His apprehension He told His apostles, especially Peter, that they could not follow Him to the place to which He was going. He had previously said as much to the Pharisees, and the disciples were not surprised to hear it said to that company, but wherever He was bound they did not expect it to be said to them. Peter voiced the general feeling of the apostles when he said, 'I am willing to follow thee to prison and to death — I am willing to die for thy sake'. Each one really believed it to be true of himself, but at that time, alas, it was not. In any case, even if it had been true, it was completely impossible for Peter or anyone else to do what they so fondly hoped.

By Paul's day, having completed His work on the cross, Christ had made it subjective and available to all mankind. With this in mind Paul saw the cross as both objective historical fact and subjective spiritual experience; his approach to it was very very personal. He made it intimately his and therefore preached a gospel of personal revelation in which the cross was central and all powerful. His presentation of it was most effective in the lives of others, as effective as it was in his own. In his grasp of truth and especially of the cross he seemed to excel all his contemporaries; in the understanding and presentation of the gospel he was an acknowledged prince. Comparisons can be odious, therefore without any intention of evaluation but in order to establish truth we take notice of a fact that will illustrate the claim. Even after Pentecost Peter's presentation of the cross was still objective; this is shown by his declaration to the men of Jerusalem, 'ye by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain' (Jesus). What Peter said was absolutely necessary of course, his preaching was trenchantly convincing that day as the results show: those men had to be faced up to what they had done. Yet this is not an isolated incident, for years later he wrote of the Lord, 'who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree by whose stripes ye were healed'; again his approach seems to be objective.

Perhaps this objectivity about the cross stemmed from experience. In common with the other apostles he actually witnessed that terrible crucifixion, its horrors were so ineradicably stamped upon his mind that when he spoke of it he could do no other

than think of its literal effects on Jesus; it marked him for life. On the other hand Paul, not being there had no such memories, so he could not be influenced by them or talk about them with the same certainty and authority as the eleven. This does not mean he never thought of those dreadful hours and what they meant to Christ, nor does it mean that none of those early disciples knew the cross subjectively as he; the early Church shared a treasury of knowledge through a complementary ministry. What it suggests is that in the realm of inspired ministry the Lord generally moves consistently with the writer's personal observation and experience, and wherever possible causes men to speak of what they know.

In context of that thought it is not difficult to believe that if Adam had recorded some of the events referred to in Genesis 1-4 he would have written of them in a totally different vein from Moses. Moses wrote of them objectively; he could not do otherwise, but sadly enough Adam could have written of them very subjectively. The fact that Moses wrote by inspiration of the Spirit of God strengthens the idea that God led him to write objectively because he could not project himself backward into subjectivity. Contrary to Moses, this is exactly what did happen to Paul in spiritual experience; he had been crucified with Christ and he said so because he knew the power and truth of spiritual identification. The wonder of this gospel of ours is that, beyond the power of mortals to project themselves backward or forward in time, by the power of God human souls were incorporated into the experience of Christ, the second Adam, on the cross.

It is important at this point to clarify the extent to which identification with Christ on the cross may be claimed. Men were not included in the redemptive work of Christ, so they are not identified with Him for that; for this work we needed a substitute. We were not excused that; we were excluded from it; Christ took our place as sin-bearer also. We were not identified with Him in that either, neither were we identified with Him in the work of atonement or reconciliation; we were excluded from them all. There are other equally important areas of spiritual experience though in which He died for men as being those men; His death in respect to these was both substitutionary and representative. Such is God's provision for man that Christ took man's place and fulfilled every requirement of God for man's salvation. That is what God meant when He gave Him (a) man's name and called Him Saviour. In the light of these things far deeper levels of meaning than may ordinarily be seen appear in such texts as 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth', and 'we preach Christ crucified, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God'. When these things are thoroughly understood it is difficult to believe that it is possible to benefit from Christ's work on the cross when viewed objectively unless it be experienced subjectively. Equally with Paul we must all be able to say 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live'. Only the living can confess it and no-one is living except he be crucified.

Occasionally the apostle wrote of the cross objectively, as when writing to the Corinthians: 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures'; that is a statement of historical fact. The provable historical facts of Christ are indispensable to the preaching of the gospel, they are its foundation. Paul believed in them firmly and never moved off them; whenever he touched on them he wrote most convincingly. So firmly did he believe in the cross of Christ that he made it the starting point of his written gospel. how could he do otherwise? The historic cross had meant the possibility of regeneration for him, he gloried in it. Careful reading of his works

reveals that Paul was clearly conscious he had a gospel to present to the world. It is not of the same events as those of which the authors of the four acknowledged Gospels wrote, but it is of the same person.

Paul is not credited with a Gospel in the same way as were his famous brethren though. There is no book in the New Testament headed 'the Gospel according to St. Paul'. He preached his gospel rather than wrote it, nevertheless it is clearly discernible in all his writings. His great friend and travelling companion, Luke, like himself was not among the number of the apostolic band who originally followed Jesus on earth. Unlike Paul though, he did set out to ascertain the historic facts about Jesus, and having done so he set them down in accredited Gospel style. Not so Paul; God did not commission him to do that. Nevertheless he could as surely speak and write of 'my Gospel' as any of the acknowledged Gospel writers could have done had they wished. All that is required of any person wishing to discover this gospel according to St. Paul is patient reading of his epistles; augmented by careful selective reading from the Acts of the Apostles this will be quite sufficient. This done, the discovery will be made that Paul starts where the others finished, namely at the cross and its immediate related events.

So we find that Paul's writings are unique and are totally unlike those of the acknowledged Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each of these commences their Gospel in different ways: Matthew with David and Abraham, Mark with the prophets, Luke with Zacharias and Elizabeth, John with the Word; but not so Paul. Being raised up of God to be the apostle to the gentiles, his duty was to write specifically for a people who never had a king David or a father Abraham, a people who could not boast of prophets and knew nothing of a Zacharias and Elizabeth. The gentiles had no John Baptist, no temple of God, no scriptures of truth, no ten commandments, no spiritual heredity save of the devil's seed of sin, therefore of what immediate practical use would it have been to them if he had written from the same viewpoint as his friends?

Israel had a wonderful spiritual heritage, but the gentiles had only inherited myths; so instead of a stylised Gospel, with love and skill and wisdom from on high Paul wrote down some, if not all, of the gospel he first preached. He ignored Herod and wrote nothing of the baby Jesus or of His boyhood, nor even of the days of His manhood; his aim was entirely different. The Gospel writers wrote mainly with the purpose of showing the development of their faith in Jesus' manhood to faith in His Godhead, but Paul wrote from the position of Christ's proven Godhead. Paul made very few references back to His manhood. Paul did not write about Jesus who was called Christ any more than he preached about Him; he first preached Christ who was made Jesus and only later wrote of Him. Paul preached the only Christ he knew because He is the only Christ anyone can know, that is Christ crucified. The uncrucified Jesus could not live in anyone, but Christ crucified indwelt Paul. Paul lived Christ because Christ lived him — a rare enough phenomenon in all conscience.

In his own way Paul did make reference once or twice to the birth of Christ, hut only indirectly: 'God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law to redeem', 'Christ Jesus was made in the likeness of men': these are samples of the kind of reference he made to Christ's human birth. It is noticeable that in none of his references to Christ's coming does he mention the human side at all. He speaks only of God's side and then only briefly. Paul's greater concern is with Christ's second

birth, that is His resurrection. Paul realized this was a birth and says so; he calls Him the first begotten from (among) the dead. His Father begat Him from the dead; this, and the events which immediately preceded and followed this most amazing series of all miracles, is the beginning of Paul's gospel. Christ's first birth was not a miracle; the events which preceded it were the miracle; His birth was quite natural. That He ever was born on this earth is most wonderful; it surely is miraculous that God should have given His Son to men, but His birth was not a miracle; it was the result of a miracle but it was as normal as any other man's and more normal than some. His conception, with all the great transactions leading up to it, was the miracle, His actual birth nine months later was quite ordinary.

The great miracle is that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in Mary being yet virgin; she was virgin when she conceived and she was virgin when Jesus was born. Many miracles were involved in the wonder of His coming, everything about it was miraculous except the actual birth. However, wonderful though these things are, Paul scarcely concerns himself with them; there were enough proofs and protagonists around for the establishing and propagation of these truths; he gave his tongue and his pen to the revelation of God's gospel of further truth. Therefore, by the dispensation of God, his gospel is chiefly concerned with the greatest miracle of all time and perhaps of all eternity, namely the death and resurrection of Christ. By the resurrection from the dead Jesus is declared to be the Son of God with power — that to Paul was conclusive, for him it is the great beginning.

Reading the Acts of the Apostles it may seem to appear that the early Church, especially the apostles, thought that the resurrection, not the crucifixion, was the greatest of all miracles for they were always talking about it, but this is not so. They published it so greatly because to men it was such a great miracle. They had seen so many die, but none had seen anyone who had risen from the dead never to die again. The re-animation of Lazarus had been a most amazing miracle, but he was still with them; Christ was not. He had not only risen, He had ascended back where He was before; His was resurrection. Lazarus' was only re-animation, he died again, Jesus did not. Lazarus was as near a testimony to resurrection as possible, but no more; Christ is the resurrection and the life, the ascension proved it; the resurrection was indeed a mighty miracle. Yet of the two the crucifixion and death which preceded the resurrection was by far the greater miracle. The wondrous resurrection was but the logical result of that, just as the birth was the logical result of the conception.

When it is remembered that the Lord Jesus claimed to be the resurrection and the life, it should not be considered a thing to be wondered at that He should rise from the dead. What else should be expected? It was natural to Him. On the other hand at no time did the Lord ever say or even hint that He was the crucifixion and the death; crucifixion and death were not natural to Him; it would have been wrong for Him to have said they were. He did say He was the resurrection and the life for that was truth, but so saying He posed a problem in His disciples' minds: if He was the resurrection and the life how could He die? Yet how could He prove He was the resurrection and the life except He did die? God solved the problem — before He could die He had to be made sin; God did exactly that to Him, on the cross He was made SIN.

That was the way God's greatest miracle was performed. This was to Christ as the conception was to Mary; He was made sin, it was the beginning, The Great miracle. This was the most impossible of all. Incarnation of God by virgin birth is but an

infantile miracle compared with this. Through Mary the babe was born; through death THE MAN was born. It was quite simple to God to work contrary to nature; the measure of impossibility was only on the human side, not on God's. It was Mary, not God, who said 'how can this thing be?' The angel's answer was, 'with God nothing shall be impossible'. Gabriel's remark was not so much pragmatic as prophetic — he was looking into the distant future, not the immediate future. His reference was not to the enormity of the wonder filling Mary's mind, but to the enormity of the wonder that would fill the apostles' minds when they discovered the reality of the resurrection. 'Nothing shall be impossible', he said: he was not referring to God's omnipotence, nor to Mary's incredulity; if he had been he would have said, 'with God nothing is impossible', hoping to bring her assurance of the simplicity of the miracle suggested to her. Gabriel saw nothing tremendous about that. But how full of meaning his answer becomes when we think of what God had in mind when Gabriel said it. Spoken with intention of Golgotha in His heart, it was said with deep undertones of pain and sadness. God knew it was a certain step toward the time when He would have to make His Son sin. That to Him was the most terrible thing He would ever have to do — it could be nothing less than the greatest and most horrible miracle of all, possible only to God. There are many classes of miracles, requiring varying degrees of power, done for a variety of reasons by different types of persons: God, satan, angels and men. The greatest of these are done personally by God; they are not entrusted to angels or men, and certainly not to the devil. Notable among these greatest miracles are the creation and dissolution of the universe and the destruction of the universe of sin. Of them all this latter is the greatest, for it was the most impossible of all. How could God the Son be made Man the Sin? To make Him Man, the Son (or as we more easily say it, the Son of Man) was one of the simpler miracles — God used an angel for it — but in order to make Him Man — THE SIN God had to do it Himself. It was shocking, shameful, terrible, contradictory, unjust, impossible — but He did it. Glory to His name — glory to the name of both of them. God did it on the cross and He did it totally, so totally that Jesus became contrary to nature, so contrary and ugly that God slew Him there.

Life was natural to Christ, so death, being overcome, the resurrection followed naturally; it had to, one of the reasons He died was that He should rise again in accordance with His nature. It was wonderful though for all that it could not have happened any other way. To have been in any other order it would have been wrong. Resurrection being natural to Him was of no great moment really, it had taken on death and destroyed it. Being so really a man, He had to wait for His Father to raise Him from death; being God He also Himself rose from among the dead ones — He did not find those things difficult. Death was the harder thing and the greater miracle, He accomplished nothing so great. The resurrection was a marvellous demonstration of power; God accomplished mighty things by it, but of itself it simply testified to the fact that He had died; this is the reason why those jubilant apostles made so much of it. To them it confirmed that Jesus did not die as other men die; John had told them that — standing by the cross he heard Him give out that great cry of accomplishment and then at last dismiss His spirit into His Father's hands.

Everything about His death had been different; it was not only wrong and undeserved, it was different. Having accomplished His mission, He whom they could never kill died, and He did it as He said — 'I go My Way to Him that sent me'; He was life — how could He die as other men do? Death was impossible to Him, yet by His own will and willingness He accomplished it. What happened on that cross was so wonderful

we scarce can take it in; these minds of ours, under best instruction, still only dimly apprehend the smallest part of what it meant for Christ to die. Yet this we do know, He was in perfect control throughout; He had been all along. He once said quite publicly, 'I lay down my life that I may take it again; no man taketh it from me; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again'. How true: He was God.

Perhaps the intensity of Christ's purpose may best be expressed by adapting and applying to Him a Pauline phrase which the apostle used about himself when writing to the Philippians, 'He made Himself conformable unto death'. Christ who was in the form of God took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man precisely that He should become conformable unto death in every form and manifestation but one — Gehenna. In Him death took its most horrible form in the sight of God — sin and old Adam, the nature of anti-Christ — satan. This is how Paul saw the truth and why he embraced it; the natural, personal subjectivity of it all made it so powerfully appealing to him. Christ was so wonderful in his eyes, Christ made the cross Paul's so that to him it was the place, the point, the instrument of self-riddance in every form that self took or was expressed. He discovered that Christ's crucifixion was total over the whole field of human existence, not only his personal self but also his aged self, old in the ways of sin which came through to him from Adam and the serpent by his parents. The death of the cross was his, he saw it and rejoiced in it, embracing the truth with gratitude; he had been crucified with Christ. Like Christ he lived a crucified man. Only when a man can say 'I am crucified with Christ' is the cross his and has become operative in his life; until then it is not his, though on it Christ tasted death for every man.

Paul saw this clearly and actually wrote of his experience in the past tense, 'I was, or have been crucified'; it was true, because historically Christ's crucifixion had taken place in the past, but because it was God's work it is not only past it is present. The crucifixion is eternal in power and effect — it is here, now. The act was in the recent past for Paul; for us it is the more distant past. But although it happened in the past it has not passed away. It is present because it was wrought in the eternal Spirit; by the grace of God the power of the cross and the experience of crucifixion are always in the present. Had Jesus been an ordinary man the crucifixion would have taken place and been forgotten, but because He was God manifest in flesh it is for ever. Whatsoever is wrought by God in Himself or upon Himself is eternal. By His grace God associated His people with Christ in that one crucifixion, it was an all-inclusive act. But in order for it to be real in our lives we must come faithfully to it in the present. When Paul said 'I was crucified' he referred to a realization that had been to him the end of all his struggles; it was swiftly followed by the continuous revelation, 'I am crucified'. This same revelation must live to us also or else the grace of God toward us will be frustrated. To be able to live with Christ for ever we must be always crucified with Him, for the life He lives now can only be a crucified life. We are not being painfully crucified by men, bearing our own sin, making atonement, bearing our own punishment — that was His part and His alone — but we are and must be permanently crucified as is our Lord.

This is what the apostle intended us to understand when he said the Christ he preached was Christ crucified; the tense in which he writes expresses both the fact of the crucifixion and the result of it, implying everything brought to perfection. We preach Christ crucified perfectly and permanently; He was crucified, so He is crucified now, He can be no other. Christ is permanently crucified — the permanence

of it is due to its perfection. This is not the same as saying He is permanently dead. He is not, He is eternally alive; but He is not now being crucified, because His crucifixion brought crucifixion to perfection in every aspect and every virtue in every degree to all eternity. Because He was perfect He was crucified that His perfections should perfect the cross and fulfil it. In the same way as He fulfilled the law He fulfilled the cross; being alive He is now living crucified, perfected and complete.

This is part, if not all, of the reason why He dismissed His spirit into His Father's hands straight from the cross. He had endured the crucifixion, taken it into Himself; as a man He wrought it into the eternal life of God and it cannot cease to be. The message is that the Crucified is now living, crucifixion is now existing eternally for all mankind. Ordinary men could not live crucified; thousands have been crucified who are not crucified now; they were crucified and then ceased to be in human form, therefore all the marks and proofs of their crucifixion are gone — they disappeared with the dissolution of their form. But He was crucified and lives on indestructible in human form, crucified, the Crucified made whole. He is not still being crucified; crucifixes are wrong for this reason — they should never be made nor displayed or worn, for they give the wrong impression. The true Christian Church rejoices in the knowledge that Christ is neither dead on the cross, nor dying on the cross; He is alive for evermore, and by His use of the cross and His victory there He has the keys of hell and death.

'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live' ('too' Paul and we could add); Paul saw it all so clearly and knew that what was true of Christ was true for him also, for it was true in him. As Christ lives crucified, so he lived crucified; Paul knew that he truly lived the resurrection life on earth as Jesus did. This is the only kind of resurrection life there is for us all. Paul's words were a declaration of triumph. He told the Romans that being 'baptized into His death' we are buried with Him thereby into death and planted therein, and if we are 'planted together with Him in the likeness of His death we shall be of resurrection' he says. 'Obviously', the enlightened heart cries. The words omitted from the quotation of the text, namely 'also in the likeness' and 'His' are omitted here because Paul did not write them; they were inserted by the translators. These men did it with the best of intentions to try and help in the understanding of Paul's words. This kind of help is most profitable in many places and we are most grateful to them for it, but alas they are not always so helpful and this is one of these instances; the attempt to interpret the truth here has proved rather a hindrance to arriving at its best meaning.

Paul is here stating plainly and positively the truth which lies at the heart of the gospel he preached:

(1) we have been made dead, that is slain by His death; (2) we have been buried with Him in that death; (3) we have been planted together with Christ in the likeness of His death; (4) we are of resurrection, that is of resurrection 'substance' and quality. Paul is not speaking of a future resurrection, neither is he so much speaking of Christ's resurrection as a historic event, rather he is referring to the life that made it possible; he is speaking of resurrection life. Christ is Resurrection as well as the resurrection; unless we are of resurrection we are not of Him; Paul is powerfully stating the negative side of the truth because it is vitally necessary to put it down clearly. As much as the heart may love to think of being of Him and in His life, it is not on this that the writer is here placing the emphasis. Paul's major concern at this point is to

emphasize the death and the burial and the planting lest we miss it. Given this comprehensive experience the resurrection is assured to any man; in the spiritual life it as naturally follows this death, burial and planting as in the order of nature dawn follows sunset and the death of the day and darkness.

Here then lies Paul's secret. Stated more fully and positively, the text is 'I was crucified with Christ nevertheless I live no longer I but Christ liveth in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me'. Having spent time over what may be called the negative aspect of truth, the positive side of it is very sweet, none the less we may find it very searching. Condensing the form and structure of the text, we may understand Paul to be saying, 'I who was crucified am alive, yet it is not I who live; Christ in me lives the life I now live. I with my beliefs am no longer the source of the life I live, He is. He has human being in me and I have divine being by Him, I do not have to live my life, He lives it for me'. I live by faith, but not mine, His. Paul was very careful to ensure that no-one should think he was drifting away into fantasy, so he added 'in the flesh'. It was so powerful in him that he found it easy to live in the flesh in this world for Christ, he had discovered God's secret art of living eternally, it had been revealed in him — briefly summarized it is no sin and no self-effort. With great relief he discovered he did not have to try to do it himself; it was a matter of incorporation; he had been incorporated into God and God had been incorporated into him.

The revelation to him was that it was not a matter of doing but of abiding — the struggle was over, Christ was abiding in him and he was abiding in the Christ abiding in him. It is a matter of identification and oneness, the union and integration of the 'I myself' with Christ the 'I am' within; it is the shared and integrated life. This is God's way of preserving the distinctiveness of a person while infusing him or her with His own life and personality. It must be this way — God knows no other way of doing it; human personality cannot be preserved by any other means; apart from this it must be destroyed. I must be rid of all things objectionable and unacceptable to God and kept clear of them. Crucifixion is the only way and self-crucifixion is not possible to me. Self-crucifixion was not possible even to Christ; crucifixion cannot be self-administered, it has to be administered by others — that is why God chose it for His Son. There are many forms of suicide but crucifixion is not one of them; a man cannot nail himself to a cross. Christ had to be crucified, it was a matter of being, not of doing; His was to allow Himself to be crucified, but others had to do it.

This was one of the things finally settled between Him and His Father in the garden of Gethsemane; there He lovingly yielded up His own will to God, who in turn delivered Him up to men to be tormented and slain. Before ever a cross of wood was made on earth the cross lay in the foreknowledge and will of God for His Son, so He first sacrificed Himself as a man to His Father. That was the initial step of faith, for it is the Father who presides over and directs that consensus of will of the holy three which is the will of God. He then sacrificed Him on the cross. Jesus' final sanctification was unto this and He went as a lamb to the slaughter and remained dumb as a sheep before its shearers. He said, nothing to justify Himself and nothing to condemn Himself. He did nothing; it was not a matter of doing but of being. He knew that. By keeping silent and obedient all the way through unto death He allowed it all to happen to Him according to God's will; everything that was done to Him was done for Him, He understood perfectly. It was wonderful, awe-inspiringly wonderful, miraculous; so also shall it be for everyone who will let it happen to him or her —

other than that it cannot be at all. Crucifixion has not changed its nature, it cannot; God has not devised any new techniques, there are none. He has not developed any forms of words called texts to which to pin 'faith' (so called) in order to be justified either. He had His Son pinned to the cross and the Spirit declares we are justified individually by the personal faith of Jesus Christ then and there, not by our faith in Him here and now. Necessarily we must believe in Him before it can happen to us. Faith in Him is obligatory to salvation.

When we believe Him for it, that justification of Christ's is imputed to us; at that moment it is an immediate gift imparted in this present world. But even then the actual justification is not self-procured; because it is by faith no man must think it is self-wrought, all is done by the faith of Jesus Christ. He justifies a person with the justification He wrought by His own faith in God on the cross. This justification by the faith of Christ is justification by grace alone. Grace alone gives a man opportunity to receive it by faith, but being received, it is sheer gift. The person thus justified by the faith of Jesus Christ can commence to live by the faith of the Son of God, no-one else can possibly do so. The real truth of the life of faith is living by the faith of God's Son; this makes a man a son of God. It is a dazzling prospect for any man, more, it is a present possibility for all men, but it is entirely impossible without the cross. To achieve it a man must live crucified like his Lord. As we have seen, except a man has resurrection life he is not alive with the life which God counts to be life, and except a man is first crucified he cannot be raised from the dead in order to live it. In the same way and at the same time, except Christ lives in him no man can have righteousness, for Christ is the righteousness of God. Life and righteousness are one. It was just as impossible for Christ to justify us without the cross as it is impossible for Him to live in us apart from the cross, in heaven or in earth, in God or in man, Christ can only live crucified.

There must come about a change in our thinking; it is customary and correct for us to think of the life of Christ and of the cross of Christ and of the death of Christ according to scripture and that is as essential as it is good. But it is just as essential for us to think of the Christ of the cross and the Christ of death and the Christ of life, and we must do so in much the same way as we might think of Him being born; He was born and lived as from the dead. He who lived before He was born of Mary and lived from Mary on the earth, lived through death also. We must never lose sight of that. He defeated death by conquering it. He conquered it by proving death's inability to kill and destroy Him. He lived through death, He never died by death, He defeated it and having done so He dismissed His spirit. He only used death for a few hours by enduring the cross, the means of death. When He had done that sufficiently to prove His superiority over it He yielded up His spirit to God and His body physically died by the expiry of His breath. He endured death, lived through it, used it and forsook it. He took His life through death, rejoined His body and raised it from the dead to prove it, and this is what Paul saw. He saw that for all men Christ was the firstborn from the dead. He had to be or He could not have been the firstborn of all creation, neither could He have saved us. Thank God, although He was the first one to be born from the dead, He is not the only one. Through this miracle the Lord has translated millions of persons into this kingdom of His Son. By passing His Son triumphantly through the realm of darkness and the power of death, God made the way through into the kingdom for all His sons.

The method God chose is awesome and wonderful and we must remember always that this extreme measure is the only way for all mankind. Christ must not be robbed of His pre-eminence in all things; He is the king but He is only king of those who by this means will become His new creations in this kingdom. The life of redemption is only to be had and enjoyed in this kingdom, for it was only obtained by this means. The visible man Jesus was the Christ who is the image of the invisible God: He became a man by a marvellous procreative act of God. Uncreated God, by one of His most outstanding miracles, became a procreated man, that by His cross-death He should be able to rise from among the dead and qualify for the title 'the firstborn of every creature'. He was not a mere creature as men are creatures; when He came into the world He was not a descendant of created Adam as other men are — though a woman was His mother no man was His father. God made Him of a woman and by that act and in this sense became the generator of Jesus' human life and the father of His body and because that was so His body was eternal. Jesus took that body and life into and through death that He should swallow up death in victory and be the first one to rise from the grave. No creature of any order, by whatever means it was created or procreated, had ever done so; Christ was the firstborn to God from the dead; in order to accomplish it He had to become as a creature. Being found in fashion as a man He was the image of the invisible God, and what happened in Him is law in the kingdom. By His death and resurrection He set the pattern for every person who desires to bear that same image, and by His cross and grave He established the means. None but they who bear this image are in the kingdom of the Son, and none can bear it who is not translated into that kingdom; basic transformation into His image is accomplished in process of the translation.

The translation of human beings is by means of His wondrous crucifixion and resurrection in our behalf. The spirit and power of that wondrous crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is just as wondrously made effective in all those for whom He died and rose again, who for love of Him want to die with Him from sin — its nature, its laws, its rudiments and principles. The death of the cross accomplished all this, it was God's means of applying all His power to destroy the basic elements of sin. By dying He negated the operation of the laws of the terrible invisible kingdom into which God's fallen son Adam entered by disobedience. Adam was God's direct creation, but he consciously stepped out of union with God and as a result was thrust out from His presence and His Eden. Adam emerged from Eden into a kingdom of estrangement from His creator, and all he knew of God died within him; tragically for God and man, so did all life and potential life. Scripture says, 'in Adam all die'. All who would live must therefore come out of him and out of all that kingdom of spiritual death in him; no-one need stay there. All God's children may live in the kingdom of the Son of His love, where all is made alive by the miracle of the death and resurrection of the one who was alive to God.

In those terrible hours of crucifixion that old man of death was inescapably with Him. He took him on Him and went with him to crucifixion to kill his death-states there; He slew him, the whole nature of him, together with the laws of that nature of death which had claimed him. God by Christ crucified the old man of every one of us He chose in Christ, that He might translate us into His own kingdom of love. In the Godhead Christ is the only begotten of the Father, there are no other sons there, only Christ — He is unique in God and among men, though by Him God has since begotten many sons from among the dead, which is part, perhaps the best part, of the marvel of the cross.

'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live' is now seen to be most vital self-realization; apart from it no-one is alive; that is why Paul goes on to say, 'yet not I but Christ liveth in me'. It is self-realization arising from Christ-realization; Christ must be realized within or else He cannot be realized at all by mortal man. He can be imagined by men, and believed in by men too, but unless He lives in him, mortal man is terribly dead. Great as is the love of Christ for men, unless a man is living primarily by the faith of the Son of God only, His love cannot be known by him. A man may know of the love of Christ and believe all about the love of God's Son, but he cannot know that love as his own until the Son of God lives in him. Man cannot live till he lives by the personal faith and love of Christ. Eternal life is so very individual, it is personal to each of God's sons, 'the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me', is the basic realization of eternal life of every child of God within himself. Every man must know it in himself, he must realize it personally; he must believe and know and feel it for and in himself; that is realization. It is not sufficient to know that eternal life is only because of this love, true as that is; although such love may engender great admiration for Christ within the mind, it is insufficient; with Paul each one must be living the Christ-faith-love-life of the Son of God.

God's provision for us may be stated as 'Christ's self for my self'. Astounding as it is, this is the amazing truth, and until this is realized within himself by every man the crucifixion is in vain as far as he is concerned. Far too many believers are in this sad state and because of it the grace of God is frustrated in them, rendering Him powerless to accomplish all He wants to do in that life. Grace cannot be frustrated in God's heart, nor is it destroyed in principle or withheld from others because it is frustrated in any individual; God in heaven is not a frustrated being. But many a man on earth is a frustrated being because within his own self he is frustrating the love and faith of Christ and therefore the purposes of God for his life. Christ's crucifixion was for the fulfilment of God's purposes as originally stated by Him and recorded by Moses, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'. Christ is the image of God, the effulgence of His being and the express image of His person, and when He was made a man He was a man in the likeness of God; therefore when He comes into a man and lives in him He makes God's original ideal possible to Him and us.

Christ did not die in vain, He died to obliterate from man first Adam's fallen image and to restore and reinstate him in the kingdom and favours of God, elevating him into the life of his creator, lifting him above all He first did when He began with Adam. In this transaction man receives a new spirit and becomes a new conscious self. Moreover this new self is combined with another Self whereby he becomes a greater person and realizes he has been made anew. This other new Christ-Self or Christ-Himself is the greater, stronger, dominant partner of the union and takes over the life. Following this miracle, providing he does not become foolish and allow someone to bewitch him and lure him off course, he will remain new and consciously grow up into the full stature of Christ.

This is what Paul found. Following this initial and most vital experience of the cross he not only had power to remain in newness of life, he had ability to evidently set forth Jesus Christ crucified before people's eyes — his life was an example and exposition of it. Wherever Paul went and whatever he did Christ crucified went and was manifested in that place and among those people. The undeniable Christ and His undeniable death and resurrection were set forth in the man, which is what God intended. The New Testament keeps the historical cross before men's minds

objectively, but wonderful as the Book is, it is only print on paper, it is not animate as Jesus was animate. God had to do something more. So knowing that only human beings could keep the crucifixion subjectively before men God planned and provided for men to enter into it.

The order of the revelation of the cross is in three simple steps or stages: first in the world, second in man, thirdly in the New Testament: (1) revelation; (2) realization; (3) record. The historic revelation being now past, only present human realization remains, if men do not see it in humanity it cannot be known. True we have the Gospels and we are grateful for those holy records of facts — what should we do without them? But inspired though they are, the combined record is still only the documentation of truth. The writers tell us about the crucifixion and the Christ of the cross, but good and absolutely necessary though this is, the truth needs more than words to reveal it. God needs men and women to display it here and now in this world in flesh and blood bodies as Christ did. Not that our bodies should be crucified as was the Lord's, but that our spiritual natures should be crucified from sin that our soul, the embodiment of sin, should be slain unto resurrection into new manhood.

Paul understood this clearly, especially in relation to us gentiles according to the flesh who did not have the advantages of the Jews. Beyond the few who were involved in the events of the crucifixion the gentiles could not have seen or known much about it. Very few could have read the hints and foreshadowings of it in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, for they did not have them; gentiles needed something up to date and authentic, something they could see and hear and feel. It is perhaps for this reason more than any other that in their ignorance gentiles have made to themselves crosses of wood and metal and stone or straw, even of leaves or paint, and have carved effigies of the imagined crucifixion, all to their own hurt and shame. When a man is able to set forth in his own flesh Christ crucified and living in himself he has no need of artificial or manufactured symbols produced from people's imaginations. Such a man could not reproduce in art form something which he knows in the event can only be imaginative and untrue. To create and foist on others lifeless copies and sterile reproductions without life is abomination to him; he has reality. This restraining knowledge has nothing to do with artistic talent or the lack of it, but with spiritual law and morality; understanding of the sheer impossibility of it renders him incapable of trying.

2. The Cross and the Giving of the Spirit.

Paul does not directly state the relationship of the cross and the Spirit in the plan of God, but it may be inferred from a question he asks at this point, 'did ye receive the Holy Spirit?' At this point he is seeking to bring his readers to realization of truth. There is no room in the gospel for those who wish to gain anything from God by works of law. Everything to do with salvation is of faith, so he asks them a proof-question, 'did ye receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?' Although this is the stated reason for the introduction of the Holy Spirit here, it is difficult to avoid the conviction that he is deliberately drawing attention to the importance of the crucifixion in view of the desire of God to give men the Holy Spirit. Textually Paul is correcting the mistaken view then being pressed by Judaizers that things can be received from God by the works of the law. He spent much of his life contending that nothing can now be obtained by law-works and he here chooses to make the focal point of contention the reception of the Holy Spirit: Paul found the

suggestion not only ridiculous but blasphemous. The Holy Spirit is God Himself, how can He be received by works of any kind? Israel had always known that the essential things of salvation had never been earned by law-works, salvation had always been upon the ground of faith, it has ever been by grace, never by Sinaitic law and its works. He says 'we who are Jews by nature know.... that a man is not justified by the works of the law'. Even under Moses, justification was by faith in the blood, never by works: no less today than then, perhaps even more so, the Holy Spirit can only be received by the hearing of faith.

It was for this reason and to this end that God put His Son to death and raised Him again. Because it is all of God it is all of gift, it has to be, so upon the completion of the age of law and at the beginning of the Church age God poured out the Holy Spirit. This could not have been done at any time during the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. Before He left heaven and all the while He was on earth the Lord knew He was going to be made sin and would be punished as the sinner, indeed as the original sinner Adam, the cause and originator of human sin. The plan for salvation was made around that concept of Jesus. We must never lose sight of the perfections of God: He is so perfect. Everything He does is flawless and faultless and in this perfectness it was agreed that God would only outpour the Holy Spirit through His Son after He was crucified on earth and glorified and magnified in heaven. The reason for this is very simple: God's prime purpose in outpouring the Spirit was that in Him men and women may be regenerated in the image of Christ; this could only be accomplished by the power of the crucifixion and the resurrection.

Everything God does with regard to generating Sons is according to an unvarying pattern. As with human birth the biological law does not vary, so with spiritual birth the spiritual law is unchangeable. Before Jesus could be born the Holy Spirit had to come upon Mary because the One who was going to be born of her was God's Son. As with Mary so with everybody; if a man is to become a son of God the Holy Spirit must come upon him to regenerate and re-form him. This also was all planned and must be carried through according to God's will and the original choice He made before ever the world was or sin and death had entered it. This concept was very wonderful in imagination, the decision was perfect, God knew that nothing of this marvellous creation was possible for men except they received the Holy Spirit. The divine choice for the Holy Spirit and the prime purpose for His coming was that He should take His rightful place and fulfil His indispensable function in regeneration; His work is to recreate the spirits of believing people in the nature and image of Christ in order that He should reproduce the life of Christ in them for the Father's good pleasure.

It must always be borne in mind that God does not just do something because He thinks He will, He always works according to the perfect law of liberty (of His Being) from sin or error. In all He does love and law are both the same; this is His grace. If He makes a law He does not break it; He says 'I the Lord change not'. For this reason God had to receive the risen Christ back to Himself alive before He could pour out the Holy Spirit through Him (that life). All sin had to be banished, taken away by the Lamb, before God made another move; when that was done He made it. He gave the Holy One so that we should all have opportunity to live on this earth as God's sons. That is why, before mentioning the Spirit, Paul first spoke of and set forth the crucifixion. Having done so he immediately spoke of receiving the Holy Spirit.

Paul's approach to truth shows great consistency with the Lord's own words to the apostles in the upper room before His crucifixion. Having told them He was going to prepare a place for them He assured them also that He was coming back again for them (because He wanted them to be with Him for ever) and then He spoke to them further about the Holy Spirit. 'I will pray the Father', He said, 'and He will give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever'. He was not teaching them doctrine or theology, He was telling them order of events. He did not fill in all the details, He simply moved from one major point to the other — first the crucifixion, then the Resurrection, then the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's coming was fixed. It was to be the major event between the ascension of Christ and His coming to the earth. First the crucifixion and the resurrection, then the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The connection is obvious and the conclusion inevitable: He was to be given in consequence of the crucifixion and they were to receive Him — the result — eternal life! It is all so free and so simple for us; God holds every man responsible before Himself in this matter; 'did ye receive the Holy Spirit? Was it by works or by the hearing of faith?' It is all by the hearing of faith; God did all the work. Every one who will be faithful and listen to what God is saying shall receive.

3. The Cross and the Redemption from the Curse.

The third mention of the cross is in connection with redemption: 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law ... cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree'. It may perhaps seem a little strange to us that God should have made such a pronouncement until we realize that He never decides on anything arbitrarily. God does do things because He wishes to, but He never says or does anything just because He wishes to; He never does anything against His will either! God always has a reason for everything He does, so when He said, 'cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree' there was a reason for that, in fact more reasons than one. The most ancient of these reasons goes back to the beginning of time and the coming of sin into the world and the fall of man and the heartbreak of God. Most unexpectedly the tragedy resulted from man's disobedience to the expressed will of God in relationship to a tree. Adam and Eve were forbidden to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil standing in the midst of Eden. They could eat of the tree of life — that was not withheld from them and they did eat from it and gained thereby both life and the knowledge of it. They were not commanded to eat of that tree, it was for them. In common with all the other trees its fruit was good for food; all that is, except that one tree. The command of God was not to eat of that, for if they did so it would be death to them: God's will was against it and for a while the will of man was not to eat of it either.

But there was another voice beside God's speaking in Eden, it was very subtle and most persuasive and Eve listened. Under the devil's flattery desire got the better of curiosity and, against God's will, His creatures partook of the fruit and died as God said they would. What a curse sin is: in every way it is a curse and how cursed a creature is the devil. Because of what happened in the garden between the devil and man Christ had to be nailed to the tree. No name save the one Pilate wrote has been put upon that tree; it cannot be named really, it is not possible to name it, it is so complex, so incomprehensible, so all-inclusive. It could be called the tree of death, it could as equally be called the tree of life, it could be called the tree of satan or the tree of God, the tree of sin or of righteousness, of evil or of good, of hatred or of love.

Paul could have called it the tree of man, 'my tree, I was crucified there'; it could be called nobody's tree or everybody's tree for it belongs to everyone, but chiefly to God. The tree, just THE TREE: that is what He calls it, and that is all we need to call it. By it and by Him who hung upon it countless multitudes of men have been brought to the truest understanding of good and evil. By the cross we learn the exceeding sinfulness of the sin which came into the human race by man's wilfulness in the garden; because of it He who knew no sin had to be made sin and the curse.

Sin is much more evil than we know. If a sinless, blameless man, without spot on His character or even a wrinkle on the surface of His visible life, who fulfilled all righteousness and kept every spiritual, moral and civil law, had to be made sin; if the perfect man had to die because of sin, then sin is more vile than men know or can know. Sin was revealed by God for what it was when He introduced the law into the world, but only partially — it could not be revealed fully by the law. Sin was only seen to be so terribly evil when at last it could be contrasted with Jesus who was so good. By Jesus and by what happened to Him, sin was shown up in all its unrelieved vileness. For what a man did thousands of years before and for what myriads have continued to do ever since, Jesus was crucified. Sin is evil; evil is the nature of sin and good is the nature of Christ's sinlessness, more — of His positive righteousness. Jesus Christ was nailed to the tree so that the nature of sin could be slain by the nature of good; by His sheer goodness He overcame evil and turned the tree of good and evil into the tree of life, thereby turning the curse into blessing, for He was both cursed and blessed of God there.

Paul, however, is not particularly referring here to the curse pronounced by God in Eden, but to the curse which came in with the law of Moses. God did not give the law to be a curse but to be a blessing. He pronounced blessings upon blessings to the obedient; by and large the law was altogether a commandment unto blessing. One of its greatest blessings was its power to expose sin, both toward God and man, in much detail. But side by side with the blessings, God pronounced curses upon the disobedient as well. This was not done in a spirit of vindictiveness but in love, to warn men and women of the consequences of disobedience; the blessings are only for the obedient. The ethic of law may perhaps best be summarized as follows: 'blessed is everyone that continues in all the things written in the law to do them' and 'cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things written in the law to do them'. Just as the law itself was in two parts and can be summarized into two commandments, so may all the blessings and the curses be summarized in the same way. Moses' law in effect was given to reveal in detail the human, social, moral and spiritual power of evil by specifying the sins by which it is manifest. By the law God attempted to offset sin and contain evil; Israel were 'kept under the laws in great blessing, safeguarded by equally great and terrible curses which acted as deterrents.

This was nothing but sheerest grace in operation, for the law was an interim measure intended by God to protect His people from leprous evil and contagious sin until He should send Christ to remove it all. When the Lord came to this earth and was crucified here He was made both the sin and the curse for us by God. That death was so great and comprehensive in effect and so fulfilling and compensating to God that all evil and all curses, as well as all sin (with the exception of one) were taken away. That is both the immeasurable fulness of God's provision and the extent of His blessing in Christ toward us. The only sin from which, for obvious reasons, His death cannot deliver is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit; the person who commits this

sin cannot be blessed, he is evil beyond redemption and must suffer the curse without reprieve. But to all other the message is clear and positive, 'being made a curse for us'.... Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.

God has done this so 'that the blessings of Abraham might come on the gentiles (us) that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith'. The blessing to which Paul refers came upon Abraham from God in the simplest of ways, he just believed God; that, simply that, was accounted to him for righteousness. It was almost unbelievably simple: he did not have to work for it, he did not have to pray for it, there was no need to, he did not have to earn it in any way, he just went along with God in what He said, that is all. Sweating to achieve something came in with the curse, no man has to labour to receive what is being poured upon him, no struggle to hear when God speaks. Quietness, stillness, the opening of the heart is all God requires — in other words faith.

What God did in Abraham's hearing was to make a commitment to him, He promised to fulfil the unspoken longings of Abraham's heart. Isn't God good? He did not ask Abraham to believe anything horrible or distasteful or make any big demands of him then. He came to Abraham in love, with purpose to bring him joy and untold blessing, blessings far more exceedingly wonderful than justification by faith, though that is the point Paul is making here. God is greater than the points we make about Him. This is another example of His ways with men. In this instance God is summarizing the unspoken blessings upon blessings in His heart. He is hiding His beatific face behind a veil of promise, He is making one promise the promise of many more promises. Faith in Him is the key to many thousands of blessings. Abraham is always the one chosen by the Lord when He wants to illustrate faith. He did not only believe God once for one blessing or for thousands of blessings, he believed God continually for constant blessings.

All the blessings of God are of similar nature to those God gave to Abraham, and they all hold similar potential. What may be considered lesser blessings are always summed up by and contained in the greater and most important blessings and they must all be received in the same way. Abraham believed in God and his faith was accounted to him for righteousness; he was thereby accounted to be a righteous man. What good news this is for us! It is not so much the fact that Abraham was blessed, but that he was accounted righteous, not because of any works he had done but because he believed God. It is most important here to note that this blessed state is contrasted by Paul with the works of the law and not with the righteousness of the law. This is a very important distinction sometimes overlooked. Elsewhere he explains that this righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. The righteousness of the law is the same as the righteousness of faith; there is no difference. Righteousness is righteousness, whether it be under the law or under grace, because it is the righteousness of God. It is not the righteousness of man, yet it is the first and most basic requirement of God for every man: righteousness is the basis of our salvation. The beginning of a man's righteousness in God's eyes is heart faith in God. It is a righteous thing to believe God; it is a demonstration of unrighteousness when a person chooses to not believe Him. Stimulation of the heart to believe God is the work of the Holy Spirit, it is the prelude to salvation.

The purpose of God in redeeming us from the curse of the law into the blessedness of justification by faith is that we should receive the promise of the Spirit. This is God's order and we must beware lest we believe He has made the promise and fail to receive Him about whom the promise was made. Only when we receive the person of the Holy Spirit are we made sons; justification is not the end — it is a beginning. It was for this reason that Christ gathered up all the curses of the law unto Himself on the cross and died to them. On the tree Christ was made both the embodiment of God's curse upon Adam and the world and His curse upon sin in all its forms also, that only the blessings of God should remain for His people.

What a way to think about Him — Christ the Curses Only temporarily though, praise God, but while it lasted it was very real, it broke His heart. By the power of God the curses that should have descended on our heads descended on His, crushing and piercing like the thorns wherewith He was crowned on the tree. Thorns came in with the original curse pronounced by God in Eden; for man's sake He cursed the very earth itself with a curse which still holds power in every realm of man's existence and shall do till earth is no more. Christ who without remission, had borne with the works of the cursed satan ever since he fell in heaven did so continually till He hung on the cross. There He bore the curses of God, whether they were pronounced on the ground or on rebellious law-breakers or against ignorant sinners and He bore all away. The tree ensured that; He was nailed to it by men, but God transfixed Him to the tree like the wilderness serpent Moses made and fixed to the pole in the midst of the camp. It is terrible but true when understanding dawns on us that Jesus was crucified and punished mercilessly as though He were the cursed serpent, the original cause of all sin, the one whose workings made God curse His creation. Dear Jesus bore it all uncomplaining. He was lifted up that He should attract all eyes to Him on the cross, the focal point of deliverance and life. Ultimately He bore the curse right away and He did so while pouring out the blood of redemption. The curses still stand against all who rebel against God and disobey the gospel. We needed to be redeemed from all that as well as the curses. Believing we receive full release, exoneration, exemption, because we have been brought back to God. We have received the Spirit.

4. The Cross and the Scandal

Paul's fourth reference to the cross is to its unacceptability; he speaks of 'the offence of the cross'. He is really continuing his theme, for this is closely related to his previous reference to it. Precisely because the cross was in itself the symbol of curse and execration it was a terrible offence to everybody. There is no doubt that to the outsider and the merely religious believer the emphasis upon the true nature and purposes of God by the cross is the most offensive thing about the gospel. To the normal mind the cross is an affront to decency, it is immoral, undignified, distasteful, illogical, inhumane; how therefore could it be thought acceptable that God should make it central to all salvation? The idea is scandalous; that is exactly the word Paul uses — 'the scandal of the cross'; he is not trying to hide it, he is deliberately forcing us to face the shame of the gospel. He is setting out methodically to destroy pride — no proud person can be a child of God. Christ humbled Himself to the cross and so must everybody else who wants to be a son with Him. The cross will humiliate everyone but the humble. Refusal or inability to bear the scandal of the cross has been the downfall of many. The crucifixion of Christ is mankind's greatest condemnation, the crime of the ages, proving man's unqualified hatred of God; it reveals man's insanity and outlawry. To be bloodthirsty for His death and that particular form of it

would have been stupid and barbarous even if He had only been a man, but because He was the Man it was an infamy and because He was God it was a blasphemy. Worse, far worse than this, it was indescribably sinful and should a man in any way unrepentantly defend and justify it he is unforgivable.

The seriousness of the gospel for all of us lies just here, because Jesus was raised from the dead. His crucifixion is not only a matter of history; it is also a contemporary issue. The cross and the crime are not a dead issue; it is a live subject to this day. The prime purpose of the gospel is to focus attention upon this. Every man who has heard the gospel is in some degree drawn to the cross and the crucified One. From that moment he is obligated by God to pass his personal judgement upon what happened those years ago; God has furnished us with the documents containing all the evidence we need to have. Christ was the Man and the God and each man's future shall stand upon his own evaluation and judgement of Him. What was done by the Jews through the Romans at the dividing of time was superseded entirely by what God did by the same act for us all — it was the decisive hour for all mankind. All must be awakened to their accountability to God for what He did then.

Moral complicity in the Jews' and Romans' crime and criminal culpability are not imputed to us; we do not have to answer for what they did.. No individual is held responsible for what another individual does in his own age or in any past age or shall do in the future. The presentation of the crucifixion to modern man is a fait accompli by God though; all men are as inescapably shut up to it as were the Jews in their day and Israel to the law before that. Those who then rebelled against Moses' law were cut off without mercy; likewise they who now purposely and unrepentantly rebel against Christ's cross and law shall as irremediably as they be cut off without mercy. This is unpleasant truth terrible to contemplate, nevertheless it is predetermined by God; having fixed it, He has made or will yet make all men face up to it, either in this age or in an age to come.

The Offence and Superiority of the Cross

The gospel of the cross is thrust upon us unasked; of themselves it is almost certain that men would never seek it. Crucifixion was a most distasteful and shameful method of capital punishment. Beside and beyond being a mere instrument of death, crucifixion was devised by the Romans as a punitive measure for several other reasons (mostly offensive to our taste). The Romans were a civilized nation, one of the greatest civilizations the world has known, but they were also a very warlike nation, heathen, fierce and cruel. By many and frequent battles and conquests they forced their way into foreign lands afar and built an empire over which they imposed their iron will. They did this with such success and to such degree that to this day their mark remains ineradicably impressed on the nations they successively conquered and ruled. Wherever they went they introduced crucifixion; in the Roman world justice was a byword and the cross was its ultimate symbol. No country under their authority would have been left in any ignorance about the power and meaning of the cross, though not its saving power — the Roman cross did not symbolize salvation but death.

Today the cross is regarded as barbaric and loathsome; the whole civilized world now condemns the savage nature which could devise such a thing and the heartless system which could apply it. How then could modern man be expected to accept and look

with equanimity upon this most inhumane method of imposing the death sentence? God knew that it was almost beyond expectation — why then did He send His Son into the world to face that kind of death and incorporate it into salvation? It should be borne in mind that God sent His Son into the world at the end of an age specially to be crucified. The crucifixion was foreshadowed, though not forecast, in such scriptures as Psalm 22: what God did was quite deliberate — it was done in full cognizance of what effects it might have in the twentieth century A.D. It should also be taken into account that it was precisely because of what took place by the crucifixion that men and women of this century think it to be an atrocity. Christ not only accomplished redemption by the cross, He started something in the mind of humanity that has changed the world so radically that men and women think crucifixion is barbarous. But at that time Romans were not considered barbarous; they were the leading nation on earth, educated, civilized, law-abiding and victorious; when they came to Britain they brought the inevitable cross with them. This land was then heathen, our forebears were savages, scarce removed from cavemen we are told; they were defenceless against Rome and were soon made slaves; many who escaped the sword were hung on crosses.

In this modern age it is not what Rome accomplished by the cross but because of what Christ accomplished by it that people think the cross to be philosophically and aesthetically wrong. It is no longer a legal or historic matter, it is a spiritual matter; God used the cross, that is the challenge. It ill becomes sensible people to despise that which God has made their only hope. Yet still the cross is a scandal. Even in those far-off days many other methods of putting people to death were known to men, yet God chose none of those for His Son. He chose the time and sent Him into the world precisely that He should suffer death by crucifixion and we are told that for Him it was the fulness of time. Why? And why did He do such a thing? He knew that the death of His Son would need to be preached throughout all time in all the world as the central determinative factor of salvation. Whatever made Him choose the cross? Why not decapitation or poisoning or even stoning (primitive and torturous as that was) or some other method equally well known to men, just as effective and certainly less barbaric; why did it have to be the cross? He realized that the cross would cause disgust and shame and be outwardly offensive to countless human beings, furnishing the gentle and the civilized and the cultured and the merely religious with sufficient aesthetic grounds to reject His proffered salvation, yet He chose to do what He did. What then are His reasons for so doing?

It is an axiom in law that when crime, especially serious crime, is to be punished, the judge, in passing sentence, should bear in mind that there must be an exhibition to public justice and that it is his duty to include that in the sentence. Crime against society, though it be perpetrated against one person, must never be treated as a private matter; it must be treated as a public outrage and punishment must be meted out accordingly. Punishment may not be inflicted according to the tastes of, or to suit the desires of, an individual or a small group of individuals in society; the judge passing sentence may not do so according to his own whim or because of any personal injustice or damage he may have suffered. Punishment must be imposed according to outraged public conscience. When passing sentence the mentality, decency, standards and desires and intentions of the whole people must be interpreted by the judge. He may not act as an individual but must apply the verdict of the people because he is acting as their representative; the judge is the servant of the nation.

A judge is as a president and must pass sentence as from a body of law agreed upon by a law-abiding nation. His own personal tastes or standard of ethics, his views on the particular case or person on trial, though they may be identical with the people's, are not primarily taken into account. The body of law is an expression of the will of the people. It is either the agreed opinion of a nation of people or the decision of their received head(s) of state; ideally it should be both. Therefore the sentence when passed is the will of the people and before passing it, it is the judge's duty to rightly ascertain by proper investigation whether the accused is guilty or not guilty. He may not decide whether or not the guilty should be punished; the law (and therefore the people) decides that. Certain crimes merit certain retribution and although a little latitude in interpretation may be permitted, the judge may not alter the law, he may only apply it; especially is this so in the case of capital punishment.

The death sentence is not imposed with the idea of educating the individual in social morality by corrective punishment. It may have a salutary and corrective effect upon others in society who may be planning misdemeanours and that is good; it may also act as a deterrent to the spread of similar criminal intent; but be that as it may, capital punishment is not regarded primarily as corrective and certainly not as reformatory to the individual; it is the final word of the people upon certain forms of crime. Capital punishment is the execution of the will of the people, it is insistence upon total exaction, full payment and strict justice without mercy for a crime which has no forgiveness; it is based upon the Mosaic code of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'; fairness and justice are its commendation, and righteousness its foundation. It must therefore be thoroughly understood by us all that the death of Jesus of Nazareth by crucifixion was an exhibition to public justice by God. Jesus was crucified according to the will of God in order to reveal to men the effects of sin upon God and His creatures. The crucifixion was the execution of God's implacable will, God was outraged beyond placation because of sin. Beyond being an exhibition of God's personal wrath against sin, the crucifixion was also the demonstration of His righteousness, it is His just reaction to sin, not a merely emotional one. Further still the crucifixion was not only executed for Himself as expressing His own personal revulsion, but also as expressing the will of all righteous people.

When Jesus came into the world it was an understood thing between Him and His Father that once becoming a man He would have to accept and bear the sentence of death in Himself. He had already accepted that position before being born but He was God only then, He was not the God-man, therefore when He did become a man He had to re-assess the position from a human angle and re-affirm His commitment as a man. This is what took place in the garden of Gethsemane. It cost. He could not shed His blood there — that was reserved for the hill of redemption and the actual cross, but His sweat was as His blood in that garden of consent and commitment. There the sentence was passed and accepted and from thence He bore it as against Himself on behalf of others, right through crucifixion and death and burial.

The high priest sentenced Him to death, Pilate sentenced Him to death, nearly everybody sentenced Him to death, but the death they thought of and imposed upon Him was not that death, it was not the death He accepted in the garden. They, all of them together, though they marshal all their power and combine all their authority, could not pass upon Him the sentence He had already agreed to and accepted on the throne in heaven and on the ground in Gethsemane. How could they? They did not know the grounds upon which to sentence Him. Neither priest nor Pilate, great and

high though they were, knew with whom they were treating, nor did they know why they were sentencing Him, 'Art thou the Christ the Son of the Blessed?' cried the priest, 'Whence art thou?' asked Pilate like an echo. They and all who questioned with them did not know, they were ignorant, it was beyond their ken as confessed out of their own mouths, and it was out of their hands. Their sentences were as nothing to Him: He had already been sentenced. God did it. When Jesus was finally led away to be crucified He went bearing the sentence of death He had accepted from God. He suffered for the crimes of humanity against God and humanity, crimes He Himself had never committed nor ever thought of committing: He was punished as though He was the guilty one of heaven and earth — all who had perpetrated those crimes both directly or indirectly since the foundation of the world: this vital truth of the cross is perhaps too little known.

There is a comprehensiveness about the cross. When God punished His Son He did it not only as from Himself but also as from the considered opinion of a completely convinced people, a people who, if they could have known the whole truth and had been able to adjudicate, would have passed a body of law utterly justifying what He did at Calvary. What He did there He did for us as us, as though we were one with Him in the act, On our behalf He exhibited what would have been our outraged sense of justice had we known and had we been He. This is perhaps one of the greatest of the many reasons why God chose the barbaric cross for His Son. If He had done this to anyone else but Him, for any lesser reasons or with any other purpose than this, it would have been monstrous sin, but in this light it is totally right. This very comprehensiveness of the cross was the greatest reason why the cross was so offensive to the men who were troubling the Galatians. They never understood its fulness, they were offended simply because by it God has accomplished everything which was formerly accomplished only by the ceremonial law; this did not please them at all. They wanted their religion, not the cross.

The great thing at issue among the Galatians was the religious practice of circumcision. It was to them the most fundamental ceremonial of all. By it every male child in Israel was made a child of Abraham, an inheritor of the kingdom and a debtor to keep the whole law. So important was the tradition that, irrespective of the day, circumcision must be performed without fail eight days after the birth of the child, whether it be solemn sabbath or feast day or even the great day of Atonement. Failing this, despite his birth, even though he be a very Isaac, he was cut off from the altar of God, doomed. It can well be imagined what a tender point this was among people; every earnest caring person would have been most concerned to keep the commandment. Imagine then their consternation of heart when people realized, and rightly so, that it struck right at the root of their traditional faith. It destroyed their foundations.

Paul's teaching cut clean across everything; he taught that circumcision was nothing but an outward symbol and quite valueless in the Church; he went so far as to say that under some circumstances it could be definitely harmful to spiritual life. He certainly made it clear that if circumcised people were saved it gave them no spiritual advantage over uncircumcised members of the Church. The cross of Christ rendered the faith and practice of Jewish rites no other than merest superstition. He insisted that all circumcised people were to recognize that circumcision practised for spiritual advantage was quite useless, it provided none; it must be regarded as concision only and its supposed advantages renounced. Paul laid down that circumcision is now

accomplished by the cross of Christ alone, it is of the heart and not of the body, it is in the spirit and not in the flesh and it is done by God and not by man.

So then, whether to Jew or gentile, the cross was an offence — it still is, there is no minimising the power and scope of its meaning, it is unlimited and uncompromising. Because of this it is a very delicate subject now as then, though for different reasons. This is brought out by the figurative meaning of the word translated offence here. We are informed that the word refers to the trigger of a fall trap, a very delicate piece of mechanism included in the setting up of traps to catch birds or animals: by this trigger the poor creature brought about its own captivity, for the slightest touch would move it and cause the trap to spring. This device was always set up well within the trap so that almost always the prey was inescapably caught and held. So it was with the matters of ceremonial circumcision and the cross: both are triggers and they are diametrically opposed to each other. In either case the person who embraced one or the other was 'caught'. The circumcised person was debtor to keep the whole of Moses' law, the crucified person was debtor to keep the whole law of Christ. The cross was a very 'touchy' subject indeed in Paul's day; preached properly it stripped Jewry of all its symbolic religious overtones and outlawed its former ceremonial practices. 'Neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision but a new creature': Paul says we must walk by this rule. Circumcision today is only a show unto men in the flesh, crucifixion shows in the spirit before God.

5. The Cross and the Crucifixion of the Flesh.

The fifth mention of the cross is again with emphasis upon the flesh — what a hindrance to spirituality it is. This time Paul is not speaking with regard to flesh in the bodily physical sense, that is in the same substance in which circumcision was practised. When Paul says 'they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts' he is obviously not saying that it is every man's duty to crucify his own body on an actual cross. Literal self-crucifixion is impossible — crucifixion is one of the few methods of death which cannot be self-applied. In any case Paul is not advocating suicide. Paul is talking about the application of the power of Christ's crucifixion to the evil propensities and powers of self operating in the flesh of a person; if not crucified these will destroy the spiritual life of a Christian. More than this, he is asserting in plainest language that by the Holy Spirit they who are Christ's have already done this thing — they have crucified the flesh', he says: the heart of faith will always do it. Such a strong affirmation leaves no room to doubt that this is conditional to salvation, though at the point of conversion this may not necessarily be understood to be so. At regeneration the spirit of man becomes spiritually alive in Christ; from that moment he is spiritual, that is to say he consciously knows he is alive; he is a man made newly aware of his spirit, for he has new spiritual powers and affections and desires.

Until this happens to him man is a dead creature in spirit; though a natural, normal man, he is cut off from God and totally fleshly in his affections and desires. He may recognize that there is a spirit(ual) side to his make-up, but to do so may only add to the worsening of his state if he develops it wrongly. In company with all around him apart from Christ, a man cannot help living in this world for his own ambitions and fulfilments in the flesh. He loves these things and in common with his fellow men he lives for their expression and satisfaction and enjoyment. These inward affections and lusts develop into habits which, though not identical with the sensual fleshly cravings

of the outward man, are correlated with them; they so closely correspond to these that they are often confused and indistinguishable so that they are thought to be the same. They are not. Those that are Christ's must learn to distinguish between the inward man and the outward man and their respective activities and potential.

The inward man should be thought of as having all the powers and possibilities of its outward counterpart. It should also be recognized as being far more powerful, having greater potential than the outward man — he is only a shell. The inward man is the power of man and that does not differ from person to person or in male or female. This is borne out by Peter; when addressing himself to women in his first epistle he speaks of 'the hidden man of the heart', not the hidden female. The man hidden within is the one to whom God addresses Himself; alas, so does satan. This man has all the potentialities and abilities of the outward man; he is capable of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling; he has powers of conception, he can also beget; he can think, speak, work, he can run, walk, sleep, live, die, he is not limited as the body in which he lives is limited — he is far greater than that. He is the one who forms habits and if they are to be broken or changed he is the one who must be changed. He is either good or evil, he is the one who by the grace of God is born from above, and having been born must obey the laws of Christ.

In order to keep spiritual, every regenerate person must know how to maintain the crucified life in all things. This is the secret all must learn, and a special watch must be kept over the affections and lusts. These likes and dislikes and fixations of ours are very strong, they are powers to be reckoned with, for they are not under the control of our conscious mind. They seem to range freely and at times hold sway over the entire spiritual, mental and physical realm of human being and capability. Being so natural and so strong they are perhaps the least controllable of all our appetites and abilities, and can so easily become habits and bondages. We must become very wakeful here and very aware, for often the restrained function of these powers is allowable and correct. Praise God it is precisely here that the cross makes its most powerful effect; unless all these powers, that is the full potential of the inward man, be crucified and raised again, spiritual degeneration will unavoidably take place. By crucifixion some powers will be totally eliminated, others will be made controllable. We must be taught of God in this.

The resurrection of the inward man into spiritual life will manifest itself in every person by many virtues called here the fruit of the Spirit. These are spiritual invariables; unless these be present there is no life, for the new life consists of them. They are listed here as 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, self-control'. All these are spiritual qualities, they are also the natural characteristics of Jesus Christ, a choice description of His inward life; all these were consistently manifest in Him. Perhaps at this point more than any other it becomes clear why Paul associates the giving of the Spirit with the cross. This fruit is of the Spirit, it was of the Spirit in Christ. Except He had lived this life, except this had been His inward state, He could not have been an offering for sin. He once said that no man could take His life from Him and that He would lay it down, but how could other men have it except someone bring it to them? Hence the need for the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes to a man in order to reproduce these virtues of Christ in him and will do so when that man agrees to co-operate with Him and crucify his own flesh.

One of the lesser-known of the great wonders of the cross is its availability in the Spirit and one of the Spirit's greatest functions is to bring the cross within reach for our use. No-one unaided can discover the cross; the way of the cross is known only to the Spirit and unless He leads us there we can never find it. When He does so He will impart the secret of its use and the power to use it. Only when the Holy Spirit has procured the whole-hearted consent of a person's mind and sees and believes the voluntary intent of that man's will is He at liberty to release to him the secret of the cross and make known in that man's experience its spiritual power over the flesh.

In a wonderful passage in his letter to the Romans Paul makes this leadership and direction of the Spirit quite unmistakable: 'if ye live after the flesh ye shall die', he says, 'but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live; for as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father'. Here the leading of the Spirit is set forth as being essential to the adoption and is spoken of in connection with sonship, liberty and the inheritance. These are included as being part of the forward drive of the Spirit as He leads the sons on to glorification and ultimate manifestation.

However, none of this is possible to anyone except the backward drive so essential to the correct forward drive of the sons is first known. The Spirit of God always leads to the cross of mortification first and therefrom constantly. The place of mortification is the place of death; mortification is vital death. This death must be sharply distinguished in the mind from vile death; this is a totally different death. Vile death, or the vileness of death, is spoken of here in sharp contrast to this vital death; it is not mortification of the flesh but corruption of the flesh. Paul speaks of this as the bondage of corruption and links it with vanity and pain. Mortification is by the vitality of the death of Christ. One of the reasons why Christ's flesh saw no corruption was because there was no corruption in Him. Because His inward man was without the corruption of sin His outward man was kept free from corruption in the grave. Our inward man can be kept clear of sin and shall be if we allow the Spirit to lead us to the cross so that the constant process of mortification may proceed without hindrance or cessation.

As the literal cross of wood had power over the physical body to bring to death, so does the spiritual power of the crucifixion bring to death the degenerating spiritual power of all God calls flesh. By far the greatest miracles which took place at Calvary were spiritual miracles, all accomplished by Jesus' superhuman power, none of which were seen by human eyes. The real power of the crucifixion was superhuman and supernatural: inhumane and horrible as it is, the death of the cross was not an unnatural death; it was an unwanted death enforced by law, but it was not a physical miracle. When at last the person died and escaped his agony it was only natural that it should happen — that was what was intended and everyone expected it to take place and many came to witness it. But those who witnessed Jesus' death witnessed a miracle.

Jesus did not die as other crucified men died, the thieves crucified beside Him being witness to that; quite naturally they fought to live, but not He: He dismissed His spirit and died long before they did. Even in the macabre final moments He was Lord; He controlled His own death, but the thieves were mere men — they could not die at will. His triumphant exodus must have been a very wonderful miracle; His death on the

cross was an amazing exhibition of power, but even so it was not the greatest of the miracles Christ did on the cross. None of the onlookers saw the great spiritual miracles taking place there. Only spiritual beings could see them and no-one but God understood them fully; O what battles went on in and around the Lord that day. Spiritual Man of righteousness and holiness that He was, offering Himself without spot to God on our behalf, He was at the same time dying as the helpless carnal man of iniquity, laden with sin and also as old Adam, condemned, unforgivable, rejected by God. In one act He combined all, He was as the penitent sinner making his peace with God, and as the mighty protagonist defeating the devil; above all He died to sin. The cross was the scene of His last temptation and His greatest triumph, and as it was with Him so it is with us.

The greatest point of temptation in a man's life is the place where the cross must be applied. It is always to a lesser degree and with different purpose than that for which Jesus died, but it is just as vital to us. We do not have to destroy the devil but we do have to conquer him. Likewise we do not have to bear and put away the totality of sin, but we do have to put away the particular sin. And let every man be sure that if he does not put away the particular sin the totality of his old nature will again assert itself. 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh'. They are contrary one to the other and if this conflict is going on within the believer he is rendered incapable of doing what he wants to do. This impotence is a most frustrating thing, destructive of true spiritual life, fraying the temper and often causing quarrels between friends and brothers and dear ones. Paul warns of it emphatically, speaking about biting and devouring one another, even consuming one another — spiritual cannibalism! Monstrous! So much for uncrucified flesh, that is what it does; it is a rebellious, lustful, ravenous, destructive beast, and the Spirit is against it. Its affections and desires must not be satisfied under any circumstances or for any excuse — it and they must be crucified together without mercy if we wish to be the kind of spiritual man Christ was. Unless this is done it is not possible to be spiritual and if we are not spiritual we cannot live in the Spirit, and if we do not live in the Spirit we cannot walk in the Spirit and if we do not walk in the Spirit we cannot achieve spiritual objectives but shall constantly fail.

This means that we must not in any way direct our spiritual, mental and physical steps toward the gratification of fleshly desires and affections. All legitimate, simple bodily needs and desires may be attended to and at times satisfied to the glory of God, so indeed may those of the soul and spirit, but only as by the cross; nothing of humanity is acceptable and approved unto God, or can be for His glory except as from the crucified man. Only the crucified man can live in the Spirit, that is live to God as Jesus Christ. The man of the flesh cannot do so; he can live in religion, its traditions and customs, its beliefs about God, its symbols and prayers and songs, but it is a living death, vainglorious and worthless. The flesh does not produce the fruit of the Spirit of God; it only brings forth the fruits of its own spirit and does its own works, none of which are for God's glory or of His kingdom. The man who does his own works thereby declares he is his own king and an enemy of the cross. The power of the cross sets a man free from his own works to do the works of Christ.

But this is not Paul's chief concern here. He is really concerned with the fruit of the living Christ in a life as distinct from works. He is talking about Christ within, bearing fruit unto His Father through the life of that person; Christ considers that His Father must be glorified in all, because He is the Husbandman to whom the fruit belongs.

Fruit is life in entirety; it is an end-product, a complete personality in which all characteristics and habits are changed from mere earthly concepts and standards of good, which are for the satisfying of the flesh, to heavenly standards of virtue and good that satisfy God. Because life and time are progressive, this is a continuously repetitive and progressive experience. The Lord Jesus, using the vine as the basis of His teaching, told us of the expectations of His Father in this respect; annually the vine must produce more and more fruit. His business is to bring forth fruit to His Father through the branches.

6. The Cross and Circumcision

The sixth mention of the cross is really a reinforcement of some of Paul's earlier statements about it. It reveals his utter abhorrence of Judaism and his loathing of the Judaizers from which and from whom Christ had set him free; 'they constrain you to be circumcised only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ', he said. Whoever these people were, their propagation and practice of circumcision was hypocritical cowardice. The apostle's words are very penetrative; he was very angry about these things and quite merciless; 'I would they were even cut off which trouble you', he said. This particular statement is the last of his three citations of the cross with reference to its power and work in the hands of the Spirit.

The first three references to the cross have to do with the redemptive work of Christ: the second three are all to do with the power and purpose of the cross against the flesh. The Galatians needed this emphasis, for it was in this area that they were most gravely at risk. The suggestion being fed to them by misguided Jewish believers was very subtle. Those people did not seek to prevent them from believing the gospel, they wanted them to include something more than that in it. They should preach, so they told them, that beside believing in Christ, everybody should be circumcised; this would make the gospel more palatable to Jewry. The subtlety of the doctrine lay in its appeal to loving-kindness and inoffensiveness. It sowed the idea that by this love and understanding would be promoted in the church and their gospel would be more acceptable to men. But the unmentioned, perhaps unseen sin of it was that if that were so the glory of salvation would not, nor could be, given to Christ alone. The practice of circumcision would unavoidably mean that some of the credit must be given to father Abraham and prophet Moses.

The devil does not mind who is brought in to move people's hearts away from believing in Christ alone for salvation; satan always wants to substitute the good for the best and sadly enough hearts are often only too open and vulnerable to his suggestions. But such error, once allowed into the Church, before long opens the door wide for him to bring in other famous, though perhaps less illustrious, persons of the past also. The tendency toward pantheism is natural to the heart of religiously-minded men. Peter on the mount of transfiguration is sufficient illustration of this: he wanted to include Elijah and Moses with Christ into his pantheon and was willing to build a temple or pitch a tabernacle for each of them alongside Jesus. 'Not for one moment' says God, 'this is my beloved Son'.

It is so sad that believers are such gullible people; it seems we are so very easily bewitched and switched on to erroneous ideas. Even the cross itself can be so wrongly presented and the crucified Christ so easily misrepresented and abusively treated that the gospel is rendered ineffectual. This was Paul's great concern and the reason why

he wrote the epistle. He realized that the cross, together with the reasons for the crucifixion, must be presented to the churches again and again. There are so many high-sounding words and high-flown ideas circulating among believers. 'Good motives' and 'moral reasons' and 'the best of intentions' are often put forward as substitutes for righteousness, but none of them are acceptable to God: 'this is my Son, hear Him', He says. The desire to be under law and to be obedient seems to speak of a submissive spirit wanting to be ruled by God, but this is not so; the Galatians are a typical example of this. In this instance he pressed home freshly upon them that, if they wished to be under law and be obedient, let them keep the law of Christ and obey the truth of the gospel and not seek after Moses' law.

With regard to Abraham, since they were so enamoured of him and circumcision, let them remember that he had two sons and that both of them were circumcised, but only one was the promised seed. Circumcision does not guarantee salvation. Ishmael was the son of Abraham as well as Isaac, but Ishmael was of the bondwoman; he was not born after the promise, his birth was of the flesh and so was his circumcision. The commandment to circumcise was of God and in obedience to Him Abraham circumcised himself and in his zeal to obey the Lord applied the commandment to all the males of his household, one of whom was Ishmael. That day Abraham circumcised very many, not one of whom was born after the Spirit; his own son Ishmael was born after the fleshly desires of his own and Sarah's hearts. Abraham, who saw so much, never foresaw the trouble they would cause. Their impatience was still causing trouble in Paul's day. How irreversible was their zealous, fleshly desire and how regrettable! It was not till years later that he circumcised 'him who was born after the Spirit'. Isaac was born according to the promise and power of God and the affections and desires God wrought in Abraham and Sarah to do His will.

Unfortunately circumcision, by its very nature, having been once done, cannot be undone. Jews still practise circumcision and so also do the Arabs, but it is valueless to them all; the blessing of Abraham is upon none of them. The significance of circumcision in relationship to God's commitments to Israel in the future is obscure. One thing is certain, the cross of Christ has made all sacramental practices and works, formerly made compulsory by the law of Moses and ordained of God as means of salvation for men, superfluous and irrelevant, circumcision included. Sacramentalism has no saving power in the Church of Christ, but the spirit in which they were practised has not died among the churches to this day; that is the tragedy. There is a spirit in man which even now invests the sign with the power and spiritual effectiveness of which it is only the symbol; this is superstition at its worst.

All the symbols of the Church have been degraded by the belief, only too common among us, that they impart grace. Whether baptism or the communion or anointing with oil, all these and others beside them have been made substitutes for the thing for which they stand and have thereby been degraded to tokens of the curse instead of signs of the blessing. Perhaps the most potently dangerous of these is the communion: this ordinance enjoined upon us by Christ, wrongly understood and ignorantly practised, is a deadly habit. The symbols in which it stands, namely bread and wine, wrongly taken are actual media of sickness and death in the midst of the churches, the exact opposite of what God intended. Baptism may be singled out as another ordinance, intended by God for blessing among men. It has been made a substitute for the real truth for which it stands. From time immemorial men have made pictures, symbols, signs, statues their idols and have turned all the practices connected with

them into mere ritual; God's reasons for instituting them have become as nothing and He is grieved. Man can be very religious and in his zeal he sometimes seeks to apply to himself truth which is exclusive to the Church. Whenever this happens the results are disastrous to that individual.

Any people who trespass beyond God's intentions and use the symbols He instituted for His regenerate Church alone preach and minister destruction to those they purport to help and bless thereby. All such practice is satanically inspired and carried out in the zeal of flesh excited by unregenerate spiritual convictions; none of this is of the Spirit of God. Man has always done these things, the habit has not been recently introduced; it all began in Eden, the seeds of all these things were planted then, though not by God. As Adam exceeded God's word, so did Abraham. Although Abraham did not disobey God in the same way as Adam, he certainly exceeded God's will in the promise He made to him and so the mystery of 'the flesh' in spiritual things was typed out. The pattern is clearly defined and easily traceable in scripture. From the time of Abraham's experimentation in concubinage Ishmael has represented the circumcision of the flesh, but Isaac has represented the circumcision made without hands wrought by God in man's spirit — the real circumcision.

The inevitable tragedy of it all (it always works out like this) is that he who was born after the flesh persecuted him who was born after the Spirit. There were so many in Abraham's camp who were born after the flesh, they were not even his seed, yet he zealously applied to them the special sign. He did this with the best of intentions of course (had not God given him the order?). They were his workers and retainers, possibly also there were some camp-followers. He was a good man and he wanted blessing for them all, so although he was not the father of their flesh as he was of Ishmael's, when he received the commandment he circumcised them. Presumably they stayed on with Abraham and by reason of that fact dwelt in the promised land. In some measure they all partook of Abraham's blessings there, but not one of them had direct personal inheritance in it because they were not the spiritual seed. Even Ishmael, the one who through seniority would have had ground for claiming the special double portion of the blessing, was by God's orders cast out; Abraham was not allowed to give the promised land of God to him for an inheritance, the God of the land would not be his God. He watched over him and made provision for him, but He would not be his God. Circumcised though they were, this was the same for every one of them.

To explain these things to the Galatians Paul told an allegory in which Hagar, the mother of Abraham's child of the flesh, represents the law and earthly Jerusalem. Long before Paul's day what in David's kingdom and psalms was the city of God had become the Jews' house of bondage; they were satan's slaves. Because of what she and her children did to Christ, Jerusalem and the Jews' religion had been excommunicated. Judaism and national religious systems remain rejected to this day. Jerusalem is the mother and head(-quarters) of sinister law-works in which the flesh delights, for thereby it can achieve pseudo heights of religion. Any covenant she had with God is now broken, and her fleshly children, together with all their bondages, must be cut right out of the churches. Until Jerusalem which is above mothers us all, Jerusalem which now is on earth is the mother of us all. In the allegory she is 'the flesh'; Sarah, her heavenly counterpart, is 'the Spirit', the 'mother' of all God's children. We must be born from above — Jesus said it.

Paul takes up this idea of circumcision, applying it widely when he says 'I would they were even cut off which trouble you'. His deliberate intention was to destroy the superstitious belief, rampant among the Jews, that circumcision of itself was a great spiritual blessing — it was not. Paul laboured this point much. By these people, whether in Jewry or throughout Christendom, whatever their religious attachment, fake doctrines and religious practices are being substituted for true experience of Christ. Through them all the glory that should go to Christ by the Spirit goes to satan via the flesh. Paul in his day was incensed against them and so should we be in our day, 'Cast them out, cut them off', he says, 'they are bewitching you, you've stopped running the race, you've fallen from grace, you are in bondage'. The churches must run like athletes and walk like champions and to do so they must discard all the trappings of religious flesh. We all must walk with Christ in the Paradise of salvation without any of this pseudo-religious clothing of cast-off practices. Fear of persecution must not prevent us from preaching the cross of Christ; to refrain from doing so is to glory in the flesh. The availability of the cross in the Spirit commits us all to using or applying it in every realm of our being; to fail to do so is to despise it. All spiritual, mental and bodily appetites can be adjusted to God by the cross, so that by the Spirit, on the cross we can offer ourselves without spot to God.

7. The Cross and the Crucifixion of the World

The whole of man's trouble is the result of failure to obey the original truth presented to him — because the Galatians did not do so they did not retain their original blessing. The full power of the cross as presented by the apostle and exemplified in his life was lost on them; they did not enter into it, therefore they did not understand it. The need for the cross beyond its initial blessings and the need for personal crucifixion is always a mystery to those who are uncrucified. The objective cross is seen to be beneficial and is accepted, but we all must know the subjectivity of it. Paul did and finalized his letter with these words, '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'. It just had to be like that with this man — with him there could be no half measures. The world was finished for Paul; all it held for him was opportunity to preach the gospel and suffering and death; he was crucified to the world — it held no attraction to him and he held no attraction for the world; it was mutual. That was how Christ wanted it for him and it is how He wants it for us. Beside revealing the disposition and temperament of Paul, this is also an indication of the man's love and loyalty. It is also an insight into the wisdom and logic of the Lord; salvation could not work out in man's experience in any other way. It would be of no use insisting that the flesh must be crucified if the world is not crucified at the same time. The flesh exists in the world; likewise the world was created by the flesh and for the flesh.

The world as spoken of by Paul here is not to be mistaken for the earth, nor is it to be thought of as the original cosmos God created in the beginning. Sin has entered the world and by it man has created his own conditions of life contrary to God's will within God's creation. It is to this the scripture refers when speaking of the world as Paul is doing here. He is referring to the order or condition or state in which man exists on the earth; it is variously called by him culture or civilization or some other relevant name; according to his spiritual state a man's soul may delight or conversely hate to live in it. Paul saw right from the beginning that in Christ Jesus there lay a whole new world, a spiritual structure and condition of life created for him; he also knew that he had been created into it by the conjoining of God and man in Christ. He

also knew that the former creature he had been was slain and that the old creation into which his parents had given him birth was in a state of death. None of the things which had been gain and valuable to him, in which he had formerly lived so completely and successfully, meant anything much to him any more. What he had counted to be the true life was now death to him. It was a dual operation. He had cast them off and was dead to them, and they and the world in which they existed were dead to him. So powerful was Christ's crucifixion and so effective that it works in every realm of man's existence in this world — it had to or else it could not have served God's purposes. The cross was God's method of the ultimate destruction of the sinner and his sin, of the flesh in which he expressed it, of the self who wanted it and of the world in which he practised it. The cross is almighty, it is the infallible, chosen instrument of the Almighty.

Sympathizers with Jesus Christ after the flesh mourn and shudder when they think of what the cross did to Him, but terrible though it was for Him, they need not try to feel for Him there. He once told the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for themselves and not for Him. It was not that He did not appreciate their concern, He simply did not want them to live in fleshly sentiment. Everyone should weep because one so pure and good as He should have to suffer for their sins. Paul had it right when he said he wanted to know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings by being made conformable unto His death. It is what He accomplished by the cross through His suffering, despite His pains, which is the far more important thing.

Paul gloried in the cross and for this reason: Christ's crucifixion was an abuse of the cross by men, but the glory of the gospel is that while men were putting it to its most dreadful abuse, God was simultaneously putting it to its greatest possible use. God's good news to men is that He overruled the wickedness of men and used the cross for purposes other than men intended, and not only so, He also thereby made it His, not man's and the devil's. He who was being crucified was the Son of man and He who was doing the crucifying was His Father and God. As He said, when He was lifted up from the earth the judgement of the world was taking place, and the prince of the world was cast out also; that was another of the real miracles of the cross. Incredible as it may seem it is true; He engineered the cross, overruling all men's and devils' schemings, using them for His own purposes and making all things work together for men's good and His own glory.

This dual power of the cross is one of the most wonderful of its many features. Behold the wisdom of God as it is revealed in this particular instance: it is plain common sense that if a man is dead and the world is dead there can be no possible collusion between them. O the wonder of truth! In spiritual reality the old world is dead and so is the old man who lived in it. To men of faith the new creation is here, the old spiritual power of the flesh is crucified and so is the person who lived in it; Old things have passed away by the death and resurrection of Christ, the end of the ages has come upon us; Paul says these things in other places. In the physical universe we await its happening, but in the spiritual realm it is already done — all that remains for every man to do is to enter in and live in God's completed spiritual work to the best of his advantage. This unredeemed and un-redeemable world is slowly degenerating into corruption before final extinction as predicted. The revelation Paul is declaring is that by the cross all redeemed men can live clear of the world and shall finally be brought into the future new creation — the death and resurrection of Christ is so complete.

On the other hand, if a man is alive being un-crucified, though the world be dead the man will still cling to it. Even though the world could not cling to the man he would cling to it; he would not be able to let it go. It would be the same also if the positions were reversed. If the world was alive and the man was dead the world would not let the man go, but if both be dead neither can cling to the other — it would be impossible. God forbid then that I should glory save in this cross of Christ; by God's gracious laws it has become established as the basic rule of all life and justice and judgement in the affairs of God and men. We must walk by it and live by it, or we can never know the true peace of God.

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