

## Inwardly Applying the Cross

**A** practical question that arises about the subjective experience of the cross is, how do I apply the cross? What does it mean for me to experience the cross and apply it in my practical problems and situations? In answering this question we need to realize that God is working over our lives to transfer us out of the self into the spirit so that we might live Christ. This means that the source of our life is no longer “self,” but our regenerated spirit where Christ dwells in us (2 Tim. 4:22). It means that experientially we need to learn how to live out from Christ Himself. The way this transfer is effected is by experiencing the cross in our daily life. So we must answer this practical question of how to apply the cross.

Applying the cross is related to the outward aspect of the cross by which God comes to us through the sovereign environments He allows day by day, even moment by moment. He measures out things that cause us to experience cycles of death and resurrection, so that we would be transferred more and more out of our self and into the spirit. The Lord allows the environments to come, as Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 4:11: “*We who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake*, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” On the one hand, we are handed over to trials, environments, and all kinds of situations. On the other hand, we need to match

those environments with the inward application of the cross by the Spirit in our spirit.

### *The cross and vision*

Experiencing the cross is very much connected to vision. In Romans 8:13 Paul speaks about the inward application of the cross: “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.” Then following this verse on applying the cross, Paul brings in vision. What kind of vision? It is a vision of the whole creation expecting something to come forth. All of creation is eagerly waiting for the revelation of the sons of God (v. 19). Here creation is personified by Paul as stretching her neck toward an object of attention. Creation is crying out, as it were, for the redeemed children of God to be conformed to the image of His Son, to be revealed as the sons of God, to express Christ. Thus, when Paul speaks about the subjective application of the cross, he speaks of it in the context of a vision of the meaning of creation. This shows that all of creation came into existence as the setting for you and me to be conformed to the image of God’s Son, God’s Firstborn. So we need to see that the whole creation is waiting for our transformation, our conformation. Based upon this kind of vision, we apply the cross subjectively to terminate, to end, the old creation

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in our being. The self, the flesh, the soul-life, the world — everything that competes with Christ — must be terminated subjectively so that the Lord could be wrought into our being.

The single most important factor in the subjective application of the cross is vision. The question in all our trials is, what do we see? When you are tempted to talk back to someone in a way that would give vent to your flesh, what do you see in those moments? When you would like to strike out at someone — to either vindicate yourself or to say something in a cutting way — what do you see? What is your vision then? If our vision is on an earthly level, we will exchange words with our spouse and live out the self. There will be no application of the cross to interrupt what we feel, to not carry out what begins to boil within us. So without vision we are a person who does not execute the cross from our spirit over our self in that kind of situation.

But, brothers and sisters, many of our problems are solved very simply if we have vision, if we see that the meaning of everything is Christ — this Person gained by us subjectively. And the way we gain Him is by losing everything — losing our opinion, losing our heated reaction — not gaining it, but losing it. We lose our reaction by dropping it, by interrupting it. We are not suffering through it, but we are letting it be terminated. Just terminate it, gaining Christ in that moment. This must be our vision. If we are under this vision, everything is clear. You are clear about your marriage. You are clear about your job. You are clear about your problems. Because the Lord Himself had this vision before Him, He endured the cross, that is, He applied the cross (Heb. 12:2). We have the same vision set before us, so in like manner we apply the cross in every situation.

In our experience this vision means that we learn to say, “Lord, I am here to be one with You, not to live out myself. Because I am under Your purpose and economy, I live one spirit with You for this self to be terminated. Thank You that I am on the pathway. I am running the race. I am headed for the judgment seat. All my daily life is going to be accounted for. All the exchange of words with my spouse is going to be accounted for” (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10-12). The question in that day will be, how has the cross operated in your life? How much inward application of the

cross has taken place to lose the self and to gain Christ?

To talk about the cross and losing the self may not sound so appealing, but we are talking about it with vision — the vision that our destiny is to be saturated with Christ. Under this vision everything becomes simple and clear. It is not mere doctrine to us. We see by vision that the destiny over our being is conformity to Christ. The meaning of everything is to gain Christ. This becomes the factor for us to deny the self, take up the cross, and follow the Lord to be constituted with Him. We need to be filled with this kind of vision.

#### HOW TO LIVE A LIFE INWARDLY APPLYING THE CROSS

##### *Exercise your spirit*

The way to live a life inwardly applying the cross is by exercising your spirit. Exercise your spirit to renew the vision continuously in order to execute the cross over yourself. This is exactly what Paul is saying in Romans 8. Let us consider verses 13, 14, and 15 together, looking first at their structure: <sup>13</sup> “. . . but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received a spirit of sonship in which we cry out, Abba, Father.” The “putting to death” in verse 13 is the *result* of the leading of the Spirit in verse 14. That is, the leading of the Spirit is a leading to put to death the practices of our body. So, verses 14-15 actually reveal to us what *precedes* the putting to death in verse 13. Thus, in our experience verse 15 brings in verse 13. That is, the exercise of our spirit in which we cry, “Abba, Father” (v. 15) brings in the leading of the Spirit (v. 14), and this leading issues in putting to death the practices of the body (v. 13).

##### *Renew your vision*

You just consider, by the exercise of your spirit you freshly renew the vision of *who you are*. And because this exercising of our spirit is a continuous experience, Paul uses present-tense verbs to describe it. In Romans 8:15-16, we are *crying* “Abba, Father,” and the Spirit Himself is *witnessing* with our spirit. Notice, the witness is that we are the children of God.

And then Paul quickly adds in verse 17, “And if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we also may be glorified with Him.” In other words, out of that crying comes the sensation that you are a child of God, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. And if you suffer with Him, you are going to be glorified together with Him. This is vision coming to you instantly when you exercise your spirit. And it is vision with a consciousness — “What am I doing here arguing with my wife? What am I doing vindicating myself? What am I doing living out this flesh again? What am I doing here? O Lord Jesus!” You begin to exercise your spirit and get out of your reasoning mind and your fickle emotions. This is the vision of God’s purpose and economy that comes by exercising the spirit. Exercise and stimulate your spirit. Call on the Lord. Cry “Abba, Father!” The result will be an instant and fresh consciousness of who you are and what you are doing here.

#### *Apply the cross*

Exercising the spirit is the way to execute and apply the cross in our experience. If we do not exercise our spirit by crying, “Abba, Father,” the Spirit does not have anything to witness with. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit. “Our spirit” in verse 16 is “the crying spirit” in verse 15. Therefore, His Spirit witnesses with our crying spirit. This means that *we* take the initiative to exercise our spirit, and then it is His Spirit that bears witness with *our initiating spirit*.

The witness that His Spirit imparts to our spirit is an inner testimony that we are children of God. This is a subjective consciousness that emerges within our being. It is a Spirit-produced consciousness of who we are. We are children of God with a destiny to be conformed to the image of His Son. We need that consciousness reproduced over and over again in our daily life. When we are passing through various trials, we need to have the instant knowledge of what we are once again stamped upon our consciousness. Simply taking the initiative to release our spirit with “Abba, Father!” will launch a consciousness in us of our destiny at that given moment, in that given situation. We are not mere earthly creatures. We are destined to bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:49). The Spirit-produced consciousness in Romans 8:16 takes

us out of our earth-bound view, our self-pity, our morbid introspection — all the different aspects of the self — and brings us into the fact that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ to be glorified together with Him.

Praise the Lord that we have a spirit and that by exercising our spirit we experience what Romans 8:13 describes. Paul says, “If by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.” To say “by the Spirit you put to death” means that there is an aptitude toward the cross. It is an aptitude that is given to us by the exercise of our spirit to put to death all the practices of our body. When we contact the Lord, enjoying Him, calling upon Him, we are exercising our spirit of sonship. And with this spirit of sonship is the realization, “Lord, I just need more of Your element wrought into my mind, more Christ into my emotions, more Christ into my will.” This is the kind of spirit we have. So the Spirit gives us an aptitude to apply the cross: “By the Spirit, you . . .” This aptitude comes out of exercising our spirit. This is how to live a life inwardly applying the cross. This continually refreshes and renews our vision.

Perhaps last week in your daily life, this vision was so clear. The consciousness of being a child of God with a divine destiny was ever before you. By the Spirit you put to death everything that surfaced in your being — not only your badness, but your goodness, your living independently, your living out of your own energy, your own strength. You just put it all to death. You said, “Lord, I am not going to live by my life today. Although I do not have a specific consciousness of sin or evil, yet, Lord, I have the possibility of living out of my self, out of my own energy. So by the Spirit I put to death my self-righteousness and self-confidence, and I reject living by my own natural life.”

This vision may have been clear last week, but today the vision, with its consciousness, is not so sharp. We need the vision freshly renewed. It is not something that transpires once and for all and then we are controlled by it automatically. In one sense, that is true. But in another sense, the vision needs to be constantly brought to the surface of our consciousness. This could be likened to having the power of a desktop publishing program permanently stored on the hard drive of your computer. On one hand, the

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# Our Desires

– Part 2\* –

## *Directing Our Hearts into the Love of God*

Besides guarding our hearts, what is another way we can handle our desires? We can handle our desires by directing our hearts into the love of God. The Bible says, “And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” (2 Thess. 3:5). The word “direct” refers to the direction of our hearts. It refers to where our hearts are going, where they are pointed. We must realize that God is always directing our hearts into His wonderful love. His love is the place where He wants our hearts to abide. And we can cooperate with His directing. Paul says that we can turn our hearts to the Lord (2 Cor. 3:15-16). Jude tells us, “keep yourselves in the love of God” (v. 21). This means that we can cooperate with God’s activity of directing our hearts into His love. And the way we cooperate is to say with our whole heart, “Lord Jesus, I love You! I set my heart on You. I desire You above everything else in this world. My heart is wholly and singly for You. Lord, I love You. Lord, I love *You!* I don’t love sports. I don’t love music. I don’t love entertainment. I don’t love money. I don’t love a career. I don’t love education. I don’t love relationships. I don’t love those things. I love my Lord! I love Jesus Christ!” This is the kind of prayer that ushers us into His love.

Perhaps some of us are thinking that this is impossible. Given our inward condition, we could never pray such a prayer. Our feelings toward God are flat, even cold. We feel hard inside, so having a heart that loves God above all else seems like an impossible thought. But the book of James reveals that our mouth is powerful enough to turn the direction of our heart (James 3:2-5). In fact, James likens our tongue to a little rudder that can turn a large ship. Our heart is like a large ship that needs to be turned, that needs to be directed to a different course. To turn a ship in a different direction seems to be an enormous task. It is not like turning a bicycle. We’re talking about a huge ship! So what does it take to turn such a big ship? Just a little rudder! A small rudder has the ability to change the ship’s direction. James gives another example — that of a wild horse which wants to go its own direction. What does it take to control and direct that big, wild horse? Just a little bridle and bit. The horse’s bit is quite small, but it is able to direct such a powerful and headstrong animal. James says that our

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\* This article is from a message given at a high school retreat and is the continuation of a previous article about our desires.

tongue, our mouth, is the rudder of our heart. It is the bit of our heart. Thus, we can actually change the direction of our heart by the use of our tongue. When we open our mouth and use our spirit to call on Jesus, to cry out to Him, our heart gets redirected. Before we call on Him, our heart may seem so cold, so indifferent, so distant. To love Christ more than anything else may seem impossible. But when we use our mouth to say, “Lord, I love You!” then our heart gets redirected to the Lord.

And this kind of cooperation just “pulls the trigger” for the Spirit to operate in our lives. God begins to flood our lives. He starts to irrigate our souls. He begins to bathe us in His love. This happens by setting our hearts singly on the Lord Jesus. Isn’t this encouraging? It is so encouraging that we have a mouth, we have a spirit, and we can direct our heart right into the love of God. Of course, this doesn’t mean that we are “coming up with” desire for God out of our own resources. It doesn’t mean that in myself I have any desire for God. Do we realize that apart from God we have no desire for Him? If you were to strip us of all the influence of grace in our lives and leave us to our own raw flesh, we would find absolutely no desire for God. That’s our condition apart from Him. There’s nothing in us for God. Paul says in Romans 3:10-11, “There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks out God.” Not even one. *Not one!* Not even *you*. You might think you seek after God, but apart from God’s grace, there is no seeking in you for the things of God.

What does this mean? This means that if there’s a little inkling in you toward God, that is the issue of God’s grace! Even if there’s a small measure of desire for God that has come while we have been at this camp, you can identify that as God working in your life. He has instilled that desire in you. That is the wonderful work of grace. Now our part is just to fan it. Fan that desire, that little desire for God. Fan it by saying, “Lord, I love You” or by singing, “I love You, Lord.” Just fan that desire and begin to direct your heart into the love of God. And what you’re fanning is more desire for God. You know how little embers are. You fan them and they get bigger and bigger, and soon you have a large bonfire. That’s how our desires are toward the Lord. The Holy Spirit comes in and He puts a little desire in there, a little ember, and then we just fan that desire. Soon there’s a big bonfire within our heart. You find yourself saying “Lord, I just love You! I love You more than anything!”

## *Fleeing with Those Who Call on the Lord out of a Pure Heart*

How else can we handle our desires? Paul tells us that

we can flee our youthful desires, or lusts. He says, “Flee also youthful lusts, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). There are two points here that we need to notice. First, consider this word “flee.” To flee means to run away from. Not to hang around it, not to “flirt” with it, not to even fight it. Not to think you are strong enough to handle it. But to quickly get out and escape. It means to not put yourself in a situation where you are tempted. It means to make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14).

As we have previously said, Satan has devised the world to draw out the wrong desires in us. The world never stirs up godly desires. The world only stirs up fleshly desires. And we must realize that each of us has our own weaknesses and susceptibilities. We know what places, what people, what atmospheres, stir up our fleshly desires. In other words, there are certain things of the world that stir up our particular desires. That is what we especially need to flee from. Do not give that part of the world the opportunity to even get your flesh started. Don’t toy with that part of the world. Rather, flee and escape “the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:4).

The second point to notice here is the phrase “with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” “With those” indicates that our fleeing is not just *out of* the world. It is also *into* the church. “With those” simply describes the church life. The world pulls out our fleshly desires, but the church life pulls out our spiritual desires. All the desires that are in our spirit—desires for the Lord, for the Word, for prayer, for being with brothers and sisters—these desires are activated by being “with those.” Of course, the church life is the practical environment that the Lord has provided to flee into. It is our safe haven from the current and tug of the world. It is where we can be practically saved from those things that stir up our flesh. But the church life is also the practical environment where, on the positive side, our spirit is drawn out. It is the atmosphere in which our desires for the Lord are set on fire. And in such an atmosphere we, as His bride, cry out for our Lord Jesus to come quickly. We, together with the Spirit, cry “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:17, 20). Our hearts are burning for Jesus to come again.

#### *Having Practical Cooperations*

Finally, the way that we can handle our desires is by practically cooperating with the Lord. In our experience, we will find that God speaks to us. And often He is gently asking us to cooperate with Him over certain items in our lives.

There will be practical cooperations that God requires of us. If our fellowship today were to stop here without talking about this point, then our fellowship would be sorely incomplete. All the points that we have covered so far on handling our desires would be of little practical profit without this final and consummate point. Of course, guarding our heart, directing our heart by opening our mouth to call on Him, and fleeing “with those” are critical for keeping our desire fixed on Christ. But ultimately, these should all lead to practical cooperations with the Lord. And if we never have any practical cooperations with the Lord based on His speaking to us, then the profit of all that goes before—that is, all that we have talked about—is greatly diminished. We surely need to call on Him. We need to use our spirit to touch Him. But we also need to say “Amen” to His speaking and actually follow through in obedience to His voice. This will do as much to make our hearts burning for the Lord as all that we have talked about so far.

Let me share a personal testimony with you. I received the Lord when I was twenty years old. What a wonderful and glorious day that was for me. The Spirit of Jesus Christ came into my heart in such a dynamic way. Jesus was so alive to me. And overnight, my heart was changed from being cold and indifferent to being fully captivated by Him. For several days, all I could talk about or think about was Christ. And then something strange happened. The Lord began to speak to me about a specific area in my life. This was all new to me. I was only several days old in the Lord, and the inward speaking of the Lord was something I had never experienced before. And yet I knew it was Him. There was no denying the fact that this was His voice. What was He talking to me about? I had a large collection of albums (this was before cassette tapes were widely used). And as an unbeliever, I used to listen to those albums for hours on end. I really enjoyed the music and even prided myself on the quality and variety of the secular music that I had collected over a number of years. In other words, my heart was wrapped up in those albums. As an unbeliever, I had no consciousness of what my heart was wrapped up with nor did I really care. But now Jesus was alive in me, and my heart was captivated by Him, and I did not want anything to interrupt this glorious enjoyment of Christ. So the Lord was now talking to me saying, “Throw away your albums.” He wasn’t saying, “You can keep them, but don’t listen to them as much.” He wasn’t saying, “Box them up and put them in the attic.” He was saying, “Throw them away.” He was requiring a practical cooperation on my part.

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program is always there. On the other hand, you still need to bring the program up on the screen in order to fully enjoy its benefits.

You may be in the throes of a situation where you find yourself perplexed, confused, and depressed. You do not know what is going on in your life. You are not clear about what the Lord is doing. You find yourself in the grip of anxiety. At that specific juncture, you need your vision renewed. You need a fresh realization that you are a child of God, an heir of God, and a joint heir of Christ. The Spirit needs to redraw on the screen of your heart that your destiny is to suffer with Christ and be glorified together with Him. You need a *present* life-consciousness that you are on the pathway of the cross that leads all the way to the throne, to sit with Him on the throne that He sat down on (Rev. 3:21). For this realization to be your experience, you need to exercise your spirit.

You do not need to live feeling that everything is wrong and that all hope has vanished. You simply need to exercise your spirit to cry, “Abba, Father!” When you do, a fresh consciousness will begin to arise in you. A fresh realization of your destiny as a child of God will begin to take hold of you. Fresh vision will emerge, and you will be able to sort out things from God’s viewpoint. This is the meaning of Romans 8:13-19. To exercise our spirit is to usher ourselves into inwardly applying the cross. This is the genuine leading of the Spirit mentioned in Romans 8:14. It is being led by the Spirit to put to death the practices of our body.

#### *Coordinate your spirit with your environment*

To inwardly apply the cross we need to coordinate our spirit with our environment. For this we have to look at 2 Corinthians chapter 4. In verses 10-11 we have both *the outward cross* and *the inward cross*. Verse 10 says, “Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus.” This speaks of the inward cross. Then this inward cross is coordinated with the outward cross in verse 11 by the word “for”: “For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” The inward cross and the outward cross operating together is the “death operating in us” that produces “life in you” (v. 12).

In verse 11 we are handed over, or delivered, unto death. We may be handed over into weakness, into a trial, into insults, into misunderstandings — into being crossed out. We are handed over again and again to all kinds of outward environments. Just as the Lord Jesus was handed over to the smiters, to those who rejected Him, to all the environment that was sovereignly laid out for Him, so we also are always being handed over. So do not be surprised. This is our lot because we have a destiny and a goal — to follow this pathway of the cross, to enjoy resurrection life, and to be conformed to His image.

Verse 11 says that we are always being delivered over unto death “for Jesus’ sake.” In Greek, the preposition used here is in the accusative case, so it can literally be translated “because of Jesus.” Thus, verse 11 would read, “For we who live are always delivered unto death because of Jesus.” He is the cause of all this. He is in our spirit, but God’s desire is to push Him out into our soul, to manifest Him, to display Him, to make Him known. Jesus is not happy being confined to our spirit. He wants to spread out into our whole being. And because many times we do not take the initiative to pursue Him, we get handed over to a death situation — to an unhappy husband or wife, or to a disappointment. We are just handed over. This is because God so desires that Jesus be manifested in our mortal flesh.

This being handed over is the outward cross, and it must be coordinated and matched with the inward cross. Praise the Lord for Paul’s testimony of his experience. He says in verse 10, “Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus.” Now add to this the first part of verse 11 so that it would read, “Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus . . . for we who live are always delivered unto death.” This shows us that Paul’s whole life was a bearing about inwardly of the putting to death of Jesus. This putting to death is a life-long process. It just continues. We are *always* bearing about. This means that gradually, throughout our whole life, the Lord is reducing us and simultaneously renewing us. And this is why Paul says in verse 16, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is decaying, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.”

This verse indicates that we need to inwardly coordinate with our environment, which means we

need to exercise our spirit of faith. In verse 12 Paul says, “So then death operates in us, but life in you.” How does death operate in you? Death operates by your inwardly coordinating the inward cross with the outward cross. Verse 12 is the issue of verses 10-11: “So then death operates.” When does it operate? It operates when you are handed over to someone’s long face and you want to react. But instead of reacting and carrying out your reaction to that long face with self-pity or vindictiveness, you call on the Lord and exercise your spirit and do not agree with your kind of reaction. In doing this your focus is immediately shifted from the person who gave you a long face to your reaction to that long face. The fact that you could react in such a way is not Christ, so you are taken immediately out of the realm of the other person being right or wrong. You are not on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Your focus has shifted. The one thing that matters is that you put to death this self that would indulge itself in pity or hurt feelings. You put to death this thing that is not Christ, this thing that reacts in any other way than by turning the other cheek. This is how transcendent the Lord’s life is that is to be wrought into our experience. If someone hits you on one cheek, then turn the other cheek to him — not in a coping way, but in a crucified way. Then you are living another kind of life. You are not living just a “good” life, but a “transcendent” life (Matt. 5:39). Thus, in the experience of coordinating with our environment, this outward cross must be matched with the inward cross. By this, a little more of the outer man decays, and a little more of the inner man is renewed. This is the proper vision for our daily living.

*A spirit of faith for the realm of faith*

This life is a life of faith. You are living by faith. You have a spirit of faith. That is why Paul continues this passage in 2 Corinthians 4 by saying, “But since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak” (v. 13). This is a quote from Psalm 116 about taking “the cup of salvation” and calling on the name of the Lord. So the speaking in verse 13 is really a calling. Paul was calling on the name of the Lord here. His exercised “spirit of faith”

brought him into the realm of faith.

In 2 Corinthians 5:7 Paul says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” This is what vision does. When we exercise our spirit, we see the real situation from the view of God’s economy — that we are in the process of transformation, and the life of Christ is being increasingly manifested in our mortal flesh. When you exercise your spirit, you get into another realm and you begin to live in faith. Our spirit brings in vision, and vision brings in faith. The more vision we have, the more faith we have.

The faith expresses itself by contacting the Lord and applying the cross: “Bearing about in our body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body” (2 Cor. 4:10). How much do we coordinate inwardly with the outward environment? God arranges our environments. He hands us over to the exact environments we need — those particular ones for you and for me. Then He causes those environments to be matched at the right time with the inward application of the cross. This inward application of the cross is an exercise of our spirit of faith to call on the Lord, to get refocused from what is happening at that moment to what is happening in eternity, to what is happening in God’s economy. Our focus is on what is taking place in the realm of faith and eternity. Our focus is not in the realm of right and wrong, what is due us, what we deserve, or how we are being treated. We get completely out of that realm into the realm of what is happening in relationship to God’s economy — how much Christ is being added to us.

This is why Paul talks the way he does in 2 Corinthians chapter 4. In verse 17 he says, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Then he adds in verse 18, “while we do not look.” The word “look” comes from the Greek word *skopeo*, which can also be translated into English as “scope.” It means a kind of looking or gazing with consideration or concentration. Thus Paul is saying, “while we do not concentrate on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (v. 18).

What are the things that are seen? The things that are seen include someone’s long, unhappy face. The

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things that are not seen are the riches of the divine life being added to your being by your believing right now that this long face is for God's eternal purpose of conforming you to the image of His Son. And this conforming happens by your outer man being reduced, losing its strength. More and more it is being crippled, it is being weakened. This old creation that defends itself, that lives itself out, that pities itself, is being reduced. And now, praise the Lord, while all this is happening, we consider, we concentrate on, the things which are not seen. This is vision!

This is how Paul talks — with vision. When he gets into the Corinthian situation and opens up the real state of things, he does not use small talk. He is speaking God's economy. He is speaking in a way of vision, in a way of coordinating all the outward, temporary things and making them work for God's economy. This is Paul's testimony, even when he speaks in 2 Corinthians 5:4: "For we who are in this tent [our body] groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life." "To be unclothed" means to be in the state after death and before the resurrection. This was not Paul's desire. His desire was to be "further clothed" — to have what is mortal be "swallowed up by life," to experience full redemption, full salvation. Then in verse 5 he says, "Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God." So we can see that Paul was fully under the vision of God's economy. Because of this, he coordinated his environment — he matched the outward cross with the inward cross.

In our daily life, many times we do not plan to experience the cross, but God arranges it by handing us over into death. Then we are forced to bear about in the body the putting to death of Jesus for the glory, the joy, that is set before us. Praise the Lord! To live the life of inwardly applying the cross, we need, first of all, to exercise our spirit, and second, to coordinate our spirit with all our environments.

— Bill Freeman

### Internet Update Reminder

Please note the following *changes* made to our E-Mail and Internet addresses from the February issue of *the Christian*:

E-Mail address – MinWord12@aol.com

Web address – <http://www.thechristian.org/>

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I struggled with the Lord's speaking. I *really* struggled with it. I didn't want to throw them away, because I loved them. So a real conflict ensued within me. After a couple of days, I finally thought, "Maybe I can sell them — at least I could get some money for them." Then an acquaintance came to my house and I sold him a couple of my albums. Immediately my heart smote me. I felt horrible inside. This feeling was also new to me — it was the grieving of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). I couldn't stand it any longer. I did not want the grieving of the Spirit — I wanted the joy of the Spirit! I wanted His presence! Oh, the presence of Jesus! His flow within me! I didn't want that to go away. So I said, "Okay, Lord." I collected my albums, went out to the garbage can, and threw them away. As soon as I put the lid on the garbage can, I could tell that the Lord was happy. The grieving of the Spirit was gone, and He was gushing again. The uninterrupted, unrestricted flow of the Spirit had returned. And my heart was again full of joy and love for Christ. That practical cooperation simply kept the flood-gates open!

But now, let us suppose that I had not practically cooperated with God. Suppose after all these years I still had those albums. Suppose for years I had argued and reasoned with the Lord and ultimately excused myself. I do not believe that my heart would be as much in love with Him today, and I do not believe that His Spirit would be as flowing within me. Yes, I could call on Him, I could tell Him I love Him. But there would be a bit of hollowness to my cry. The intensity of desire for Him would be lacking. This tells us that God needs our practical cooperations to keep our hearts set on Him alone. Thank God for His operation to single our hearts. Thank God for His grace to instill in us desire for Himself. And thank God that we can cooperate by guarding our hearts, by calling His name, by fleeing "with those," and by our practical obediences.

— Kirk Eland

### *the* **Christian**

*The Christian* is a non-profit monthly publication of **Ministry of the Word, Inc.** This paper is for the spreading of the truth of God's Word and the building up of the Body of Christ.

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