

THE INWARD AND OUTWARD CROSS

In our experience of the Lord, it is crucial that we have right thoughts about the cross and the working of the cross. Oftentimes due to an improper presentation of how the cross operates, we may have taken in the wrong thought, resulting in a wrong expectation, and thus frustrating a proper experience of the Lord. May His grace unfold the word of the cross to usher us into His life in a simple way. The proper word of the cross does not threaten, intimidate, or move us in the wrong direction. Our experience of the Lord in this dimension of the cross has far-reaching effects for the Body of Christ.

The way death operates in us

The bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ operating in our being makes us, as members, a rich supply to the Body. Being a rich supply is always according to this operation in each member (Eph. 4:16). And the operation is always an operation of death and resurrection. Once the Lord's life comes into us, we are joined to the cycle of His life. And that life-cycle is death and resurrection (Rom. 6:5). This is foundational to understand the way the Lord will work in our lives. We need to have a proper realization from the Word of God concerning the operation of the cross in our experience.

The crucial verses that show us the operation of death and resurrection life are 2 Corinthians 4:10-12. Here we see Paul's testimony of the operation of death in the midst of all the experiences he was passing through. Verse 10

says, "Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus." This verse in itself may not be so easily understood by us, but it is there. "The putting to death of Jesus" is also translated as "the dying of Jesus." Others have expanded on it to mean "the death process of Jesus." Thus it would read, "Always bearing about in the body the process of His dying." Then the last part of verse 10 reveals the purpose of this experience: "that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." This shows us that death and life always go together. The death is working and then the life is manifested.

Paul continues in verse 11, "For we who are alive are always being delivered." The phrase "we who are alive" is not speaking simply of human beings who are existing. It does not merely imply human existence. Rather, it means "we who are living in the divine life, we who are regenerated and joined to His life, we who have His life in us." We are "alive" in that sense. We are not just existing. We who are living in the Lord, we who are Christians, "are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." Then the purpose of this experience is seen in the last part of verse 11: "that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." So here again death and life go together.

One aspect of the death is that we bear it about in our body. That is inward. The other aspect of the death is that we are *delivered over* to it. The Greek verb means "handed over." That is outward. We are bearing the death inwardly and handed over outwardly to the realm of

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death. Bearing the death in our body is *the inward cross*. And handed over to death is *the outward cross*. This refers to environment. In the Lord's experience it was the betrayal, the denial, the beating and the mocking, the thorns on His brow. That kind of outward environment was all part of the cross.

The Lord had experienced the inward aspect of the cross in Gethsemane, where in His spirit He was crying "Abba! Abba!" He cried "Abba, Father!" and touched His willing spirit. Thus, what God handed Him over to outwardly was matched inwardly by His exercised spirit crying in child-like dependency. He felt the effect of the outward cross upon His soul to the extent that the only way He could make it through Gethsemane was to keep pressing through the troubling in His soul until He found the willingness for the cross in His spirit. His own testimony of this experience was, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38). So the Lord matched the outward cross with the inward cross to say, "Yet not what I will, but what You will" (v. 36). We can see death operating in the Lord inwardly and outwardly. He was both inwardly bearing the cross and outwardly handed over to it.

Then Paul concludes in 2 Corinthians 4:12, "So then death operates in us, but life in you." Notice the words "So then." These words are the direct result of verses 10 and 11. "So then death operates in us." How does death operate? (1) by always bearing the cross inwardly and (2) by always being handed over to the cross outwardly. It is in these two ways that death operates. So we see the two-fold aspect of the operation of death — inward and outward. And when this death is operating, it results in "life in you." Death and life — they always go together. This kind of life is not a shallow kind of life. It is life out of death. It is resurrection life. That is the kind of life that is imparted into the Body whenever the operation of death is going on.

The supply for the operation

There is a supply for this operation of death and resurrection. Do not think that the cross inwardly or outwardly is left to us to work out from our own resources. This is often where the wrong thoughts come in concerning the cross. Even the songs that we sing about the cross can be understood in the wrong way. Some of the lyrics may lead us to believe that the cross is something to work out in ourselves. But we must understand

that the Spirit is *the source* and *the supply* of the cross for death to operate in us. It is the Spirit that operates this death. When the cross is put into the realm of the Spirit, and we see it in that realm, we are turned in the right direction, to the right source. Our expectation changes.

Thank God for the revelation that the Spirit is in our spirit supplying us with the life whose nature is constituted with the cross. This rich supply of the life-giving Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ coming into our spirit, causing and producing in us an inner operation of death. This operation is the cross working inwardly to match what God hands us over to outwardly. Praise the Lord!

The all-inclusive Spirit of the glorified Jesus

In John 7:37-39 we see the accumulated, all-inclusive Spirit of the glorified Jesus: ³⁷"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes into Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." In verse 37 the Lord says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." Drinking is the refreshing way for thirsty ones to participate in all that Jesus is. He is saying, "Come to Me and drink. Come to Me and be supplied."

Then verse 38 begins, "He who believes *into* Me." The word "into" shows us that this is a participation in Christ, a partaking of Him. Verse 38 continues, "as the Scripture has said, out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." Here we see the Spirit described as rivers of living water coming from our innermost being. So we drink and we flow.

Now let us look at the operation in the flow of these rivers. Look at what these rivers are doing. They are defined in verse 39 as the Spirit of the glorified Jesus. That is, the Spirit here is depicted as rivers streaming forth from the glorified Christ. These rivers are operations of the indwelling Spirit of Christ flowing from our spirit. There is a river of death operating in us. There is a river of resurrection, giving life to our mortal body. Indeed, the entire process of the Lord Jesus Christ, from His incarnation to His ascension, is now flowing in the Spirit as operations of His glorified life.

The crucifying power and ability flows in this all-inclusive Spirit. So when we drink the Spirit, we are

drinking a putting-to-death life. It is a putting to death of all the negative things that are not of God, that are outside of God. So the source and the supply for the death to operate is the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus, which embodies His glorified God-man life.

The Spirit supplies death to what is not of God

In Romans chapter 8 we see the cross's relationship with the Spirit. We see how the Spirit supplies death in us to what is not of God. In verse 9 Paul says, "But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." Here we have the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. This is because in this wonderful Spirit is the entire Triune God. All that They are in Themselves and to us is flowing as rivers of living water, supplying Their life to us.

Then Paul says in verse 11, "And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." From these verses we see that Paul was totally saturated with the Spirit — the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the One who raised Him from the dead. Paul was in these rivers of living water.

But now look at what the Spirit supplies in verses 12 and 13: ¹² "So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh; ¹³ for if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." Verse 13 reveals the key point about the cross in a believer's experience. To have right thoughts about the cross, it is imperative to understand this verse — "If by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live."

Sometimes because we have not seen the Spirit when relating to the cross, we have thought of verse 13 in this way: "If I put to death the practices of my body, if I take the cross, if I bear the death." Yet when we try to take the cross by our own energy and self, we find there is no supply and ability to apply the cross. Oh, brothers and sisters, putting to death the practices of the body by the Spirit is an awesome endowment. It is a privileged gift to participate in. It is not an ascetic effort on our part. It is not my self-life coming up with something. Putting to death is a gift of God. Putting to death is part of those rivers of living water that are torrents in my being dealing

with everything that is not God. I can't deal with what is not God in me. You can't deal with what is not God in you. Only God can deal with what is not God. So it is by the Spirit we put to death.

The Spirit is the starting point for crucifixion

God begins not with myself, but with Himself. The starting point is not me. The starting point is Him. When I see myself in my uncrucified state, my starting point in that state is not me. My starting point is the Spirit of God who dwells in me. It is the Spirit who is in my spirit, where I am crying "Abba, Father!" And His Spirit witnesses with my spirit that I am a child of God (Rom. 8:15-16). I belong to a death-operating life — "By the Spirit I put to death the practices of my body." The result of that action of the Spirit over a practice of the body is "you will live."

We need to be renewed in our mind by the Word of God about the cross, and get it out of the wrong realm, the realm where it has been misunderstood. Even when the presentation of the cross has been proper, it may have gone into the wrong slot in our perception. That is why we must start with the source and the supply of the operation of death working in us — the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. "Come to Me and drink!" This is where we start. We learn to drink God and allow the divine life to operate to the extent that there is an inward cross in us that always matches the cross in our environment.

The effect of the cross on the soul

The cross may be so terrific in my environment that the force of it stuns me and often cripples and weakens me. Due to this weakening, I may not react quickly to throw off its force over my soul. This is also what happened to the Lord. His soul was shocked, stunned, awed, when the hour came for His outward cross. He was awestruck. His soul was sorrowful, deeply distressed (Mark 14:33).

When the cross comes, our soul is sorrowful. This is what happens when death operates. You pass through a period where sorrow seizes your emotion. And it may be prolonged. But simultaneously, with that operation of death weakening the outer man and decaying the ability of the outer man, there is an inner man that is deeper than that sorrow and that can only be touched by going back to pray the first time and the second time and the third

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Drinking the Spirit

In human life, eating and drinking go together. These two activities complement one another, and both are essential for the maintenance of our physical life. The same holds true in the spiritual realm. In the book of Genesis we see that God provided the tree of life for man in the garden of Eden. Adam was to partake of this tree for his food. The Bible reveals that the tree of life is a figure of Christ as our life supply for us to partake of and to enjoy. In other words, Christ Himself is our tree of life, our spiritual food. And the practical way to partake of Christ is through His Word, the Bible.

But now we must see a further item — that God also provided a river in the garden of Eden from which man could drink. There was not only a tree from which to eat, but also a river from which to drink. These two items — the tree and the river — represent our spiritual eating and drinking, and can be found throughout the whole Bible. In the book of Psalms, David declares, “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Your house; and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life.” The prophet Ezekiel received a vision in which he saw a river that caused everything to live wherever it went, and a tree growing on the banks of the river that bore fruit for food. At the very end of the Bible, the apostle John was shown in the New Jerusalem “a river of water of life, bright as crystal . . . and on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits.”

What is this river? What does it signify? The Lord Jesus clearly revealed the significance of the river when He cried out to the multitude at the feast of tabernacles, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.” Then the next verse says, “But this He said concerning the Spirit.” In other words, when the Lord was speaking about the rivers of living water, He was actually referring to the Spirit. Then in the first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul tells us that we have all been “given to drink of one Spirit.” Again, the Spirit is pictured as water for us to drink. Hence, the river of living water is simply a figure of the Spirit. Just as Christ is our spiritual food, so the Holy Spirit is our spiritual water.

Characteristics of the River

Now we must note the chief characteristics of this water which signifies the Spirit. First, this water is “living water.” Elsewhere it is referred to as “the water of life.” This simply means that the Spirit is life. He is brimming with life! He inherently possesses the eternal and divine life. Why? Because He is God. Also, everything that Christ is and has accomplished is in the Spirit. Thus, even the resurrection life of Christ — the life that rose from the dead — is in the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit is an inexhaustible and abundant reservoir of eternal, resurrection life. He is the never ending source of supply of God’s life to man.

Moreover, the Spirit does not hoard God’s life. Rather, the Spirit gives life! Not only does the Spirit have the divine life, but He also transmits life. This is why the New Testament uses various phrases about the Spirit, such as “the Spirit gives life” and “the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.” And this is why the river is always characterized as flowing. This river of the Spirit is never stagnant and still. He is always moving and flowing. He is always transmitting and giving. And wherever the Spirit reaches, life is conveyed. As Ezekiel said, “Everything will live where the river goes.” This is extremely important for us to see, because apart from the Spirit we have no life. We are completely dead. Yes, physically we are alive because we have our physical life. Yes, psychologically we are alive because we have our psychological life. But spiritually we are dead if we do not have the Spirit’s life — the eternal life of God. For us to live spiritually, we must have the Spirit. We must drink the Spirit.

Another characteristic of this water of life is that it satisfies our inward thirst. When the Lord Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman, He offered her living water. He then said, “Everyone who drinks of this water [physical water] shall thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever.” The thirst which the Lord was desiring to quench for this Samaritan woman was not physical thirst, but inward, spiritual thirst. This is a thirst that we all have apart from the Spirit. It is that deep, inward feeling of emptiness and purposelessness that haunts each of us when we are without the reality of the Spirit in our lives. Of course, we often try to quench that thirst with other things. The Samaritan woman tried to fill her inward emptiness with

immoral relationships with several men. Others of us turn to the occupations and entertainments of the world to satisfy us. But regardless of what it is, we will always “thirst again.” The only water that can genuinely satisfy our thirst is the living water — the Spirit Himself.

Finally, this river has the characteristic of being installed within us. The Lord told the Samaritan woman not only that He would give her living water, but that the water would become in her a “spring of water gushing up into eternal life.” In other words, when we believe in Jesus Christ, the Spirit is permanently installed in us like an artesian well, like an ever-flowing spring. Later in the Gospel of John, the Lord said that out of our “innermost being” would flow rivers of living water. Note the phrase “innermost being.” This spring is actually installed in our innermost being — our spirit! What a wonderful fact that Jesus Christ has put within each believer a well of living water from which we may draw at any time and in any place.

How to drink of the Spirit

It could be, however, that you have been a Christian who has not experienced the rivers of living water in recent days or weeks. You know that you have received Christ and that you have enjoyed the living water in the past. But now you feel rather dry and thirsty. You have been occupied with so many things other than God. They may even be legitimate things, things that are not sinful. Yet, these things have crowded out the Spirit. As a result, the flowing of the Spirit seems rather remote to you in your experience.

What should you do? How do you begin to enjoy the Spirit again? First, we need to understand that the spring of living water is still inside us. The Spirit who indwells our spirit has not left us. Although we may not feel His presence, He is nonetheless still living within us. Second, we must see that what has gone amiss is simply that we have stopped drinking Him. We are thirsty not because He has left us, but because we have left Him — we have neglected a regular drinking of the Spirit. We have chosen to drink from other springs. In order to properly live, grow, and be healthy, we need to take care of the basic essentials of life. Hence, in our Christian life, we must regularly drink the Spirit.

We have seen that the practical means of eating Christ is through His Word. Now, what is the practical means

of drinking the Spirit? In the Scriptures, to drink the Spirit is always related to speaking. For instance, in Ephesians Paul exhorts the believers to “be filled in spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father.” To be filled in spirit with the Spirit, Paul tells us to open our mouth and speak! This speaking can be in singing, psalming, or giving thanks. Isaiah reveals that we can “draw water out of the wells of salvation” by praising the Lord, by calling upon His name, by declaring His doings, by singing, and by crying out and shouting. Thus to drink the Spirit, we must use our voice and our spirit to speak.

Obviously there are periods during the day in which you cannot stop and take time to get into the Word to eat your spiritual food. But we can always take a few moments to drink the Spirit by calling His name, praising Him, or singing to Him. Whether quietly or loudly, we can always use our voice to drink the Spirit. And as we do this on a regular basis, even many times a day, we will find our inward thirst satisfied. There will be rivers of living water flowing out of our innermost being. And we will find ourselves growing in Christ in a normal way.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

The Spirit as the river: Gen. 2:10; Psa. 36:8-9; Jer. 2:13; Ezek. 47:1-12; John 7:37-39; 1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13; Rev. 22:1-2

The Spirit as the water of life: John 4:10; 7:38; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:1; Rom. 8:2

The Spirit gives life: 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 Cor. 15:45; John 6:63

The Spirit satisfies us: John 4:13-17; 7:37-39; Rev. 21:6

The Spirit has been installed within us: John 4:14; 7:38-39; Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 3:16

Drinking the Spirit by speaking: Isa. 12:3-6; Eph. 5:18-20; 1 Cor. 12:3*

— Kirk Eland

* This article is taken from *Christ: the Christian Life*, by Kirk Eland. This book is a step-by-step study of the basic truths and experiences of the Christian life. The book of 218 pages may be ordered for \$9.95 postpaid from **Ministry Publications**, P.O. Box 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 • Phone: (602) 948-4050 • Fax: (602) 922-1338.

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time, crying “Abba, Father!” This is what the Lord did until the willing spirit came forth and He could say, “Not My will, Father, but Yours be done” (see Mark 14:32-41).

At these times when our soul is deeply affected by the outward cross, there is a supply for the experience of the cross inwardly to match what happens outwardly. It is the Spirit who supplies — “If by the Spirit we put to death.”

In our experience we may be condemning ourself over the lack of the cross in our life. We see the symptoms and evidences of this lack in our disposition — there is no cross on my mouth, no cross on my thoughts, no cross on my actions, no death in me. If we become aware of this and our orientation for change is our self, then all we can do is play religious games in our mind, going around in circles until we are on the floor again. But if our orientation is the Spirit as our source, we will begin to drink God and allow the divine life to operate, to put to death all the crossless things in our being.

We must ever see that the working of death in us is the grace of God over us. It is the gift of God imparted into our being. The greatest privilege is to cooperate with this God-given operation. It is an operation in which death subtracts everything that is not of God and is outside of God in our being. This is awesome. It is the working of death, and it is the way the Body has life.

The outer man and the inner man

In 2 Corinthians 4:7 Paul says, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” We know that the treasure is Christ in our inner man, our human spirit. But this inner man is surrounded by an outer man — our body and our soul. Our outer man is constituted with that which has been independently developed through the years. We have this treasure, Christ, contained in the earthen vessel of our outer man.

The operation of death is related to the outer man, the earthen vessel, being disabled and weakened by the cross so that the treasure in the inner man will shine forth. We see the anatomy of the operation of death in 2 Corinthians 4:16: “Therefore, we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.” The outer man is falling apart. The outer man is weakening. The outer man is crumbling. The outer man is decaying. But the inner man is being renewed. Both of these processes are going on at the same time within us. According to this verse, death operates in a way in which environments so affect the outer man that

it cannot avoid going through depression, discouragement, defeat, wretchedness, rebellion, sorrow, and wanting to give up. You cannot help but go through this with your outer man. This is because it takes a *real* defeat to make us a person dependent on God. It is not mere doctrinal or theoretical defeat we are talking about — it is real defeat.

So an aspect of experiencing death operating in us is to have a soul that is totally troubled. This is death operating over our outer man. God sends the cross and we are handed over to death, and that death environment reacts in us as, “I can’t handle this! I’m so troubled!” That kind of reaction is death operating to deal with the outer man in the form of a troubled soul.

The operation of death in the Lord’s experience

To understand how death operates in us, we need to study how it operated in the Lord’s life as a man. Watch how death operated in His own experience. Consider what happened to the Lord’s soul when He faced the cross. Death was operating in Him at every juncture. In John 12:23-24 the Lord says, ²³ “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” This is the Lord speaking as the Son of Man without sin. In other words, we are talking about humanity in a generic sense, apart from sin.

These words concerning the death of the grain of wheat reveal the principle that, even without sin, death will always be the way to life. When we remove sin out of the picture, we still have the natural soul-life. The faculties of our soul, which are given to us by God, must all go down into death so that man’s life would be processed with God’s life by the governing principle of death and resurrection. That is, God’s original intention for man, before sin entered the picture, was that man would live by the divine life by voluntarily laying down the soul-life in death.

Consider the Lord Jesus as the grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died. His natural, human life was laid down and given up to the will of the Father in a death that would produce many grains. The principle of death and resurrection works in the realm of nature itself, as seen in the grain of wheat. The grain of wheat that dies bears much fruit by losing its life.

This illustration of the grain of wheat reveals how the soul-life of man is to be treated. To let the grain of wheat

die is to treat our soul-life in a way of not loving it, but hating it (John 12:25). The Lord says, "He who loves his soul-life loses it." The Greek word used here for "love" is *phileo*. It means to be friendly with, affectionate with, to pity yourself or pamper yourself. By loving your soul-life in this way, you will lose it. But "He who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life." Then verse 26 continues this thought: "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him." Together these verses in John 12 show that the Lord intended to identify us with Himself in the same process of death and resurrection.

Now we see death operating in the Lord's soul. We observe the process of how He "hated" His soul when it gave Him trouble. In verse 27 the Lord says, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me out of this hour?" A troubled soul is a soul feeling the pressure of the trial, and wanting to say, "Lord, get me out of this. Just take the pressure off." In other words, we may go through some kind of inward cogitations where we are considering, "And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?" This demonstrates that when death operates in us, all kinds of thoughts and proposals may surface in our mind.

Sometimes when death is operating on our soul, there are lingering things, things passing through us — "Why is this happening? Why do I get treated this way? Why am I misunderstood? Why do I always lose my job? Why is this? What should I say? Father, save me from this hour?" As the Lord was contemplating, as His soul was troubled, He was not like a bird flying above it all, singing praises in the midst of the church. He was not in that state yet. He was troubled. Death was operating. He was considering, "What shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this cause I came unto this hour."

Then in verse 28 the Lord says, "Father, glorify Your name. Then a voice came out of heaven: I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." So the Lord immediately opened His whole being to the Father and experienced the release of His inner man and the dying of the outer man. By this example, we see that when the outer man dies, he dies with feelings. He dies sometimes with tears. He dies with heaviness and sorrowful emotions. When you feel that way, it is not a cause for condemnation. Rather, it is an occasion to look your soul straight in the face and say, "Soul, this is all that can be expected of you!"

Death operates in a way to totally convince you that your soul will never be capable of submitting to God. It

is weak to the uttermost. As you and I feel this weakness, two things are happening: the outer man is decaying, and the inner man is being renewed progressively, day by day. There is a growing sense that I can't trust myself. I lose trust in myself. But at the same time there is a release of the spirit with a greater sense of dependency upon God.

Death operates from the transforming Spirit

There is more and more realization of becoming dependent upon the sufficiency of God when death operates. That is how dependency happens in us. It happens by death operating. Second Corinthians 4:12 says, "So then death operates in us, but life in you." To see the full context of this verse, we need to consider the previous verses in chapter 3. Second Corinthians 3:16-18 says, ¹⁶ "Whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit."

Now I have turned and I am beholding. And with that turning and beholding, I am getting transformed by the Lord, the Spirit. I am being changed spontaneously into the same image. Then 2 Corinthians 4:1 says, "Therefore having this ministry..." These two passages show us that beholding and reflecting the Lord *is* our ministry. To be in His presence and reflect Him is ministry. Thus, the ministry is simply to enjoy the Lord by beholding Him and getting saturated with all that He is into your spiritual constitution, and then reflect Him. Let Him shine in your heart and give light to others.

Then Paul continues in verses 1-2, ¹ "As we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart; ² but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God." Here you are dealing with God. You are renouncing hidden things. Such an inner operation comes out of the transforming supply of the Lord, the Spirit.

Death operating touches two sides of our being

We have to see that when death operates, two sides of our being are touched. Our outer man is touched, and our inner man is touched. The outer man is crippled and feels

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helpless, but simultaneously in our inner man we are supplied to relate to this crippled outer man. We pass through the throes of the outer man's decaying strength, and the result is a greater sense of need for God every step of the way. God operates in our being to renew our inner man so that we become a person with a new dispositional essence.

When death operates, your soul gets troubled — your soul is affected in many different ways (cf. 2 Cor. 4:8-9). You are passing through all the environmental dealings. Passing through them is part of death operating. Now what matters is how we relate to what we pass through — whether or not we go to *our* Gethsemane. For example, driving down the street in the middle of a troubled soul, you start to have a Gethsemane of your own. Death is working, and you can feel intimidated by the strength of your own will. You can feel your own stubbornness. You feel it. You know it. You know the struggle. It is your will seeking to assert itself above God.

What you feel is the outer man decaying. What you feel is death operating to terminate the self of your soul-life. The self gets exposed through environment. Its rebellion comes to the surface. And now it is there to deal with, not in the strength of ourselves, but in an utter dependency upon God. Inwardly you are contacting God. You are touching the Spirit, saying "Abba!" and from within, there comes a prayer that says, "Not my will."

The Lord Himself became the embodiment of child-like dependency when death was working the strongest in His own soul. In the middle of His troubled soul — in the middle of His natural life and reactions to the outward environment — He prayed, "Not My will." That means He was feeling the intimidation of His own will. He felt the temptation of a proposal — "Father, would You save Me from this hour? Father, is it Your will that I escape this?" He felt it. But He counteracted His soul-reaction with His spirit-reaction to the Father's will. Death operated in Him. By not loving His soul-life unto death, He multiplied Himself as the one grain of wheat into multitudes for eternity.

In the same way, all of us pass through real things. All the trials in our lives are real. It is all real stuff. Real rebellion gets manifested in our soul. Real unhappiness surfaces in our outer man. There is real troubling and sorrow within. Thank God for all the real stuff, because death operates in it all. With that operation the outer man is decaying and the inner man is being renewed. This is more than encouraging. This is the way it works. This is the way death operates.

The outer and inner man's experience of the cross

The outer man's experience is the operation in trouble. Consider the nature of trouble. There is trouble by reasonings rising up in your mind (Luke 24:38). There may be trouble by knowing you will deny the Lord (John 13:38—14:1). You have denied Him before and you are going to deny Him again. But the Lord said, "Don't let your heart be troubled." He said this immediately after He told Peter, "You are going to deny Me. You are going to deny Me three times." Then He added, "Don't let your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me." And then He said, "Peter, when you are turned again, strengthen the brothers" (Luke 22:31-32).

The inner man's experience of the cross is this turning again. It is the survival of a living faith inside of us that keeps coming back after we have been dragged through the mud and feel ourselves contaminated. You come back with a faith that turns again. The Lord said to Peter, "When you are turned again." The Lord had prayed for him that his faith would not fail. This means there is ability to come back on the heels of the sorrow and bitterness of our soul when our outer man has been shredded into pieces. The confident Peter had a soul that was shredded. Death operated. That is the way it operated. It operated to humble the man. But the Lord could say, "When you are turned again, strengthen the brothers." This is encouraging for all of us.*

— Bill Freeman

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