

## CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST.

Having above examined briefly the actual crucifixion of our Lord, the actual death of the Lamb of God who put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself, let us now glance briefly at a figurative use of the word *crucified*, not by way of setting aside the foregoing actual occurrence, but to learn the proper significance of the figure as used by our Lord and the apostle Paul in the following passages: –

"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." – Mark 8:34.

"They that are Christ's [members of the "anointed body" – "the Bride"] have crucified the flesh with its affections and desires." – Gal. 5:24 compare 3:29.

"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not [the old] I [any longer] but Christ liveth in me." – Gal. 2:20. [R960 : page 4]

"Our old man [our former selves, justified by faith in Christ's sacrifice] is crucified with Christ [that we might be members of his body, spiritual new creatures, and] that the body of sin [the entire sin system with all its members and branches] might be destroyed." Rom. 6:6. See fuller treatment of this text and context in May '87 TOWER.

We have seen that actual, literal crucifixion signifies to deliver up to a torturous, slow, but sure death. And the figurative closely resembles this, so that the same definition fits it perfectly. When we say then that any one is taking up his cross to follow Christ, it signifies that such a one is consecrated and is taking the first step of self-denial in espousing the cause of Christ, though it be with fear and trembling; submitting willingly to painful humbling and contempt in the sight of the world and of the chief priests and their blind followers, to share with the Master and all the members of his body the coldness and the

scorn of the world and of many they seek to bless; to be alone, and yet not alone as was our Head, for we have comfort and sympathy from him as our High Priest, and from our fellow members in his body. With him none could sympathize: he was the fore-runner on this race-course, and of the people there was none with him.

But where does our cross-bearing begin? and where our crucifixion? – where does it end? and how much does it involve? some may inquire. We answer, Circumstances alter cases to some extent, and each must apply the matter in his own case. To enable all to do this, let us notice three notable examples of such cross-bearing – our Lord, Peter and Paul.

Our Lord, born under the conditions of the Jewish Law, could not begin his *service* (ministry) until he was thirty years old, though his earlier years were spent in studying prophetic utterances concerning God's plan and his share therein. This is made evident by the only record of his boyhood days. When twelve years old, he was seeking information concerning the Father's business and was found among the eminent teachers hearing their explanations of the prophecies and asking them questions.

When he was thirty, was his first opportunity to begin the work which he had come into the world to do. We might say then, using the figure, that he took up his cross when at thirty, he came to John to be baptised of him in Jordan. This was a cross, a humiliation, because the masses of the people like John were ignorant of the deep meaning which our Lord attached to immersion as a symbol or figure of death. John, and the people, used it only as a symbol of washing, cleansing or reformation from sin. Nor was it proper for our Lord then to explain to them a symbol which belonged to an age and work not proper to be known until Pentecost.

Nor would they have understood him if he had explained. But it became him to set the example, which as their leader he would afterward expect all his disciples to follow, and hence as in his actual

death he who knew no sin was counted among transgressors, so in its symbol, the water immersion, he was "numbered with transgressors," (Isa. 53:12) who were there figuratively washing away a sinful past to start anew.

For the sinless Lamb of God to be thus misunderstood was no doubt a heavy cross, but it opened the way to a still clearer appreciation of the Father's will which he had come to perform. Obedience in taking up the cross proved him *worthy* of continuing in the Father's service – even unto death. The holy power of God came there upon him enabling him to see more and more clearly his future pathway down to Calvary, but bringing also clearer and clearer apprehensions of the exceeding riches of divine favor and high exaltation in reservation for him at the end of the "narrow way."

Under the increased light of his fuller insight into the plan of God and where the narrow way would lead, his spirit of consecration led him to turn aside into the wilderness, there to more fully consider in private the Father's plan and his future course in obedience thereto. There the cross grew heavy as he more fully realized the shame, ignominy and self-abasement to which his consecration would lead. And the tempter bore his weight upon the already heavy cross by suggesting other ways of doing good more agreeable to the flesh than sacrifice. But after counting the cost our Lord refused any other methods either Satan's or his own, of doing good, and chose to have God's will done in God's way, saying: I have come to do thy will, O my God. And with his victory he was stronger, and his cross seemed be lighter as he came out of the wilderness crucified, willingly delivered up to die – hands, feet and all and every talent and power restrained from self-service – all offered up a sacrifice to God in the carrying out of God's plan, whatever that might involve, whether the dying should prove to be of longer or shorter duration, or of more or less pain. As a *man*, then, our Lord's will was already dead to every human hope and ambition – dead to his own plans and control as a man. And yet he was not dead in the sense of being insensible to scoffs

and pains and piercing words, but *crucified*, delivered up unto death. The pinioned, bleeding members (human talents, rights etc.) quivered and twitched but always remained pinioned (*crucified*, delivered up to death) to the last, as when he prayed that the cup of ignominy might be omitted.

During all those three and a-half years of our Lord's ministry, he was crucified in this figurative sense; that is, he was delivered up to death – his will, his talents, his all, bound and pinioned – in harmony with the Father's plan. And every deed of his by which "virtue [vitality, life] went out of him" to bless and heal in mind or body the condemned sinners about him, was part of his dying, and finally ended in death – even the literal death of the cross.

Brother Paul was not literally crucified but ended his course by being beheaded. Yet figuratively he tells us long before his literal death, "I am crucified with Christ." That is to say: I am delivered up to death – my will and self-control, my talents and powers, my rights and lawful ambitions as a man, are all pinioned and stopped by my consecration, so that having no will or plan or way of my own, I may be fully able to let the holy spirit or mind (will) of the Master dwell in me and rule my every act to his service – not so dead that I will not occasionally feel a twinging of the flesh, and have a suggestion as to another way and as to what would or would not be necessary, but I keep my body and its wishes under (1 Cor. 9:27.), subject to the will of God, saying as did the Master under similar circumstances, "Not my will but thine (Father) be done."

Many get the idea that our Lord and the Apostle referred only to *sinful* desires being crucified. They read it as though the Apostle meant, *My sinful* ambitions and desires I keep under and crucify, and as though our Lord meant – Not my *sinful* will be done, O Father, but thy holy will. This is a mistake: our Lord was holy, harmless, undefiled; as such he could not have a *sinful will* or desire: His will was not to kill, steal, blaspheme, covet the things of others, nor to bear

false witness of others, nor to backbite, nor to do any [R961 : page 4] sinful thing toward God or man. His will on the contrary was to do good only, to honor God and to bless men. But as a man – a perfect man, he had a mind, a strong mind or judgment as to *how* good could best be accomplished, *how* God could be most honored and men most blessed.

Had our Lord followed his own judgment and will as to best methods of honoring God and blessing man, it would probably have been in the line which naturally suggests itself to other *good* judgments and wills – in the line of political and social reforms, in establishing pure government for the people, in meeting out justice to the oppressed, in establishing hospitals, asylums and colleges, and in cleansing the religious system of his day. But such a good will, though it would doubtless have accomplished much temporary good, would never have worked out the grand deliverance for the race, which we now see God's greater comprehensive "plan of the ages" is designed to work out. Such a plan did not occur to the mind of even the perfect man Christ Jesus. It is beyond the scope of human thought and planning. But knowing that his Father was greater than he, he rightly reasoned that implicit submission to Jehovah's will was the proper course whatever it might involve.

To be God's messenger and accomplish his will, our Lord must *crucify* (deliver up to death) all of his own good, holy, harmless, pure will, and must say fully, "Not *my* will (Father) but thine be done" – *Thy will* in *thy way* entirely.

The nearer a person is to perfection the stronger will be his will, and the more difficult to crucify it. The more confident one is that his will is good and for good and blessing to others, the more difficult it is to see good cause for surrendering it. Thus our dear Lord knew that it was needful for him to DIE as the *ransom* price for the world and shrank not from it; but knowing also that pain and public scorn and contempt as a criminal was not part of the penalty, he questioned its

necessity, whether the Father was not asking of him as the Redeemer more than the penalty of man's sin and therefore prayed, "Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me" – nevertheless I claim no rights, I attempt not to follow my own ideas nor to exercise my own will; my will is fully surrendered; I leave all to thy wisdom – Thy will be done. Our Lord evidently saw not then, what for our advantage and strengthening he has since showed us who are following his footsteps, crucifying our own wills, etc. – that extreme trial of obedience, even unto death, even the death of the cross, was *expedient* and proper, because of the *very high exaltation* to the divine nature, for which his implicit obedience to the Father's will in giving our ransom, was to be the test of worthiness.

We as followers in the our Lord's footsteps have neither such strong wills to overcome and crucify nor the proportionate strength of character whereby to overcome them. But we have the advantage of knowing clearly why so extreme and exact obedience is necessary, in all who would be accounted worthy of a place in that select "body of Christ", which is to be so highly honored with its Head, Lord and Redeemer, Jesus.

As with our Lord, so with the Apostle Paul crucifying did not mean the crucifying of a sinful will, or sinful desires, plans, etc.; for he says "I am crucified *with Christ*," and elsewhere he calls it being "dead *with Christ*" and having "fellowship in *his sufferings*." So then if Christ's crucifixion was not the crucifixion of a sinful will, and desires, neither was Paul's; and neither are yours and mine as followers of the spotless Lamb of God, crucified with him.

True, Paul and all other followers of Christ *were by nature* sinners and children of wrath even as others, and hence very much less than perfect in will, compared with the undefiled one. But their first step of faith in Christ showed them that they had no right or privilege, *to will or to do wrong*, and in accepting of JUSTIFICATION through Christ's death, they not only confessed sorrow for sins past,

but repentance and change from sin for the future to the extent of their ability, realizing also that the imputed merit of the ransom not only covered sins past, but also all *unwillful* weakness and errors future. And this justification through Christ and change of will from sin to righteousness preceded their "*call*" to follow Christ and to suffer with him and to share his glory and high exaltation to the divine nature. Thus we see that with us as with our Lord, it is our good human wills, our good intentions and good plans, (not actually perfect as our Lord's, but reckonedly so through his imputed merit) that are to be crucified, delivered up to death with, and like Christ to share in his sacrifice.

As our Lord set aside and crucified his own will, and accepted of the Father's will *instead*, so we set aside or crucify our wills or desires, no matter how good and wise they appear to us, to accept of the guidance and direction of our Lord Jesus who, now glorified, delights still to carry out the Father's plan, and the grandeur perfection of which he can now *fully* appreciate.

