

A Crucified Life
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Two Announcements:

1. We have started a new class called *Seeing Jesus In The Old Testament*. That class is being recorded and can be downloaded from our website. On the home page, click "Jesus In The O.T." to access these messages. You can also sign up for a podcast for this class (a free way to have your computer automatically download these messages as they become available.)
2. Jason Henderson just finished a book called *The Lie & The Light*. This is NOT the same PDF that has been available online for several months. This is a re-writing and expansion of those messages that was just finished two weeks ago. This book can either be ordered from the website (click the "books" link) as a paperback, or downloaded for free as a PDF.

A Crucified Life pt. 1

I made the decision to divert again from our regularly scheduled program – the Ephesians study – in order to attempt to share something that has been on my heart for quite some time now. Its one of those things where you just have to wait for the language to come in order to speak about it. And honestly...I'm not sure I've waited long enough, but I'm going to give it a try today and see how it goes.

It has to do with death. I has to do with a greater view and greater understanding of the death of Christ that works in us. Ultimately, you could say it has to do with what I'd call a crucified life. If you were to ask me what is the greatest thing going on in my life right now, and you weren't somebody that would think I was crazy for saying this, I would probably tell you that it is the experience of the death of the Lord. Now if you were the mail man or some acquaintance I might say its being a dad or something like that. But if you really want to know the truth, the greatest thing happening to me is what Paul describes in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 as "bearing about in myself the dying of the Lord Jesus". That's the truth.

I'm not going to try to rush in to what I want to say about this. There are so many wrong ideas about how death works and what it means that if I just jump right into what I want to talk about, we would all bring our most familiar definitions of words into this, how each of our natural minds have defined the cross, death, losing our life, etc...and I don't think much would be accomplished. So I want to start by saying a few things about what I don't mean....so that when I begin to describe this experience we won't drag ideas into this that don't belong. So, today is going to be something of an introduction. And we'll take it further next week.

Because we talk so much about the cross here, I end up speaking with, or emailing with, many people on a regular basis about the idea of dying to self, or dying to sin,

or carrying our cross. In these conversations I have found that there are just as many imaginations about this topic as there is about anything else. You'd maybe think that something as straightforward as death would be understood by all, but the simple fact of the matter is that whenever the mind of man is free to define a term or experience of doctrine...then there is absolutely no limit to the number of misunderstandings that can arise.

So lets, for the sake of hearing the Lord, just decide right now that we don't really know much or anything about the death that must work in us. Because frankly, we don't. I don't, either. And what I'm going to share with you is, I'm sure, a very small view of something extremely big. That's enough introduction.

I would say that most people, when they hear or read something about experiencing the cross, of dying daily, assume that this has something to do with the sufferings, trials, and difficulties of natural life. The thought is generally that God provides, or at least allows, difficult situations to come into our lives, and thereby teaches us lessons, or disciplines us, or somehow subdues the flesh or gets it under control. It is thought that, with enough of these lessons in hard experiences, that we change and die to ourselves. That seems to be the most popular assumption about what experiencing death to self entails.

I want to tell you categorically, in the strongest and clearest way that I know how, that that is absolutely NOT what dying to self involves. That is not the working of the cross. In fact, that is not even related to it.

Those types of experiences are the tribulations of life...and if you say you learn lessons from the tribulations of life than that is absolutely appropriate. You can rightly say that that type of suffering can alter certain things about your disposition or effect your soul in a significant way. But you cannot call it the cross. **The cross is not your response to situations. The cross is Christ' death working in you.** And there is all the difference in the world between those two things.

It might be helpful at this time to point out, from the Scripture, that the death that we die by His cross is the death of the Lord. Whether that makes any sense to you right now is not the issue. Hopefully it will soon, if it doesn't already. But you have to at least notice in the Scripture that when Paul or any of the Apostles describe the reality of this death that we have been baptized into, or the working of this death in us, it is always and exclusively, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ that we are experiencing. And that is extremely significant.

Rom 6:3 *Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*

2Co 4:10 *always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*

Phi 3:10 *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*

The tribulations and difficult situations of the natural man in the natural creation are unable to transform your soul. They can sadden you, teach you a lesson, change your mind, or even change your behavior...but they cannot TRANSFORM your soul. Sometimes I know that we don't even know the difference.

Lets say you have a neighbor who's an unbeliever. He doesn't know God or have any interest in knowing God. All of the sudden he and his family start going through a really hard time. The husband is laid off from work, and money gets really tight. The wife develops cancer, goes through a difficult time of chemotherapy before it finally goes into remission. Meanwhile, two of the older children go through a real rebellious time in their life and bring untold emotional strain into the family. Well, after two years everything finally starts clearing up. The dad finds a good job, the wife is in remission, and the kids have really cleaned up their act. But dad will never be the same. He's learned to really appreciate what he has. He's learned to live for the good of the moment, to stop and smell the roses, kiss his wife before going to work, spend more time with his kids. What caused that change in him? Well, it was just a bunch of bad circumstances that really made an impact on his heart. Pail brought some new perspective into his life.

But then the exact same thing starts happening to your Christian neighbor next door. All the same circumstances and situations. And exactly the same ending. Except this time, at the end of the whole thing, the Christian says he knows for certain that the entire process was, in fact, the Lord's deliberate teaching of the cross. The Lord was behind it and in it, and teaching them how to carry the cross. And from that point on, this neighbor will never forget the how the Lord taught him about dying to self. It's always the highlight of the testimony that he shares in Bible studies and home groups.

What's my point. Well, my point is that **we would have called the first guy's experience and subsequent change of heart the power of the cross if he would only have been a church-goer.** But since he's not, we have to just say it was a natural struggle in the natural realm producing a natural impact. But yet there is absolutely nothing different between the first and second situation. I hope you can see my point. I'm not saying that the second family weren't real Christians or that God isn't at work in them. I am simply saying that NEITHER of those *identical* situations is rightly called the death of the cross. **Christians are so quick to force spiritual relevance into a situation because of how it makes us feel about ourselves – especially hard things that we want desperately to be meaningful.**

I get calls and emails all the time from believers that are going through a dry time spiritually, or a hard time naturally, and everyone is so quick to call it death. Often it has nothing to do with death at all.

Now I know that what I said can be offensive. And I don't mean it to be. I only mean for it to represent truth. But I want to present the cross of Christ, the death of the Lord that works in us, to you in a way that is real, and in a way that protects it from the imaginations and perversions of the natural mind that likes to apply it to any and every experience of natural life that we would like to be spiritual. We apply spiritual words and terms to wherever we want things to feel like a spiritual experience. But the cross of Christ is exclusive to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His death, His burial, and His resurrection that must work in us and NOTHING that we add to that. And, once again, if you're not sure what I mean by His death, etc....then you'll have to hold off for a bit. I want to talk quite a bit about that, but not until I've cleared the air a little from misconceptions.

There are other ideas about the death of the cross that are equally wrong. All of them are similar in that they replace an inward reality of Christ for an outward reality of experiences. But there are variations on this. For instance...a slight variation of this first example is when people talk about, not as much the difficult things that just happen in the natural, but the situations that they believe are brought upon them specifically by the discipline of the Lord. They assume that, with this or that divinely intended situation, God is trying to make them die to something. Well, again, that's just not what it is or how it works.

Another very common thing I know that people say is "I've really just got to die to that". Whatever it might be. "I've just got to die to my T.V addiction, or my foul mouth, or pornography, or my spending habit." I'm really not trying to be picky, but that's not how it works either. I don't want to set you up for disappointment by lying to you. God is not going to crucify you to a specific thing that you think you struggle with. God crucifies YOU PERIOD. It will certainly affect all things that you may do or not do, but its not like God picks a specific bad activity and then kills the part of you that likes it. As we will see, being conformed to His death has to do with bearing in yourself the death Christ died to the entire adamic man and living in the wake of that death, so to speak. Living in the reality and truth of what God has put away by the cross. So it deals with specific things only as it deals with the entire man. You don't get to pick the thing to die to.

Still, there are others that believe that experiencing this death is a matter of reckoning themselves dead. And by that, many of them mean that when temptation comes along or some unwanted desire or behavior, then its time to stop and reckon themselves dead. "I'm dead, I'm dead, I'm dead...you said I was dead!, I reckon myself dead". But that doesn't make you dead. That actually just proves that you're alive. When's the last time you were at a funeral and saw a dead person trying to convince himself he was dead?

The death of Christ is not something you try to apply to a situation. The death of Christ is something that must be working in you before you ever come to that situation. The phrase "reckon yourself dead" from Romans chapter six has to do with living in your awareness of what is real. If you don't know, in a Spirit-given realization, what is true then reckoning won't help you one bit. Paul says in Romans 6:6 "*knowing* that our old man was crucified with Christ", and THEN verse 11 "therefore, reckon yourself dead to sin and live to God in Christ Jesus our Lord". But the reckoning must follow the Spirit-given knowing or its just wishful thinking.

If I took your wallet, put an undisclosed amount of money in it, and then told you to go to the Honda dealer and buy yourself a brand new Hybrid sedan, it wouldn't matter how much you reckoned you had 30,000. The issue would be how much cash you actually had in your wallet. If the salesman wrote up the contract and then asked for your money...taking out the wallet and reckoning 6 or 8 times that you have enough to cover it probably won't help you. On the other hand, if you KNOW and have SEEN exactly how much I put in your wallet, well then...reckoning is an easy and natural counting on what you know to be there. Its simple to reckon upon something that you know to be real.

So you can't reckon yourself dead if you don't know, by the teaching and revelation of the Spirit, what that death means and how real it is. It is an exercise in futility. But if this death has indeed begun to work in you, it is effortless and natural to reckon upon what is already real.

Alright, that is enough of what the death of the cross DOESN'T mean. What DOES it mean? Well that is an enormous question. Its not the kind of question that has a nice single-paragraph answer. And the reason is because the death of the cross is the death that Jesus died – and that is an unspeakably huge reality and accomplishment. So you can't just say "it means THIS". But I'll try to summarize it in a statement, and then we'll break it down and try to explain it more thoroughly. Here's a summary statement.

Jesus Christ, having died to sin, having died to the old man, the old covenant, and the old creation, and separating them from God...rose from among the dead and became the resurrected life of all that receive Him by faith. And as Christ, your life, is revealed in you, then all that Christ died to necessarily becomes dead to you. As Christ is revealed as the life of the believer, all that the cross has put from God's sight is taken away from your heart. That is the summary.

But to understand what any of that means, we have to understand a few foundational realities about the cross. We have to understand first of all that the cross is both a finished work of God in Christ, and ALSO, an individual, personal, dealing of God in the soul. Many don't realize that.

I was sharing with a group of people one time and a lady raised her hand and asked me a question that made it more than obvious that she had never thought of the cross of Christ as more than a historical event that accomplished the salvation of God. Well, it certainly is that. But it is also the means by which you and I grow up into the good of, and the experience of, what God accomplished as a historical event. **The cross is both what God has done and what works in you towards the experience of what God has done.**

There are not two different crosses. Don't misunderstand me. There is one cross of the Christ. That cross accomplished a reality 2000 years ago. And though you are born again in an instant, the moment Christ occupies your soul...and you come to the finished reality of what the cross accomplished *immediately*...still the greatness and fullness of that reality accomplished by the cross does not become the **experience of your soul** unless Christ, your life, is revealed.

In other words, salvation is yours immediately upon receiving His Life. But the *experience* of that salvation works in you only when the Light of that Life brings your heart to a view of what has been finished. Or you could say it this way – immediately upon being born again Paul tells us that we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. And yet, the EXPERIENCE of that death, the personal, individual experience and knowledge of and encounter with that dying, does not work in you unless God's finished work becomes real in your soul by the illumination of the Spirit of Truth.

That is the first foundational reality that we must understand before comprehending this death. I'll say it again concisely – The cross is both what God has accomplished forever in Christ, and the inward means by which your soul partakes of that accomplishment. It is a finished work, and your progressive experience of that finished work as the light of truth shows you what God has done.

The second thing that you have to understand before really comprehending how and why the death of Christ works in us...is *what* was accomplished in Christ's death. What I mean is, if you understand the death of the cross to be merely the justice of God for the forgiveness of sins, then it doesn't really make any sense for that death to work in you. God is not progressively working justice or forgiveness into your heart.

On the other hand, if you understand Christ's death on the cross to be the end of His association with sin, the end of the adamic man that He became – as 1 Corinthians 15:47 speaks of Him becoming the "last Adam" – the end of the Old Covenant that God had with Israel, and the end of God's purpose for the Old Creation...well then it begins to mean a WHOLE LOT to have **that** death working in you. To have a death working in your soul that is an end of sin, Adam, the shadows of Old Covenant religion and relationship, the soul's connection to the natural realm....that is a death that we can begin to see our need to bear.

Let me try to say that more clearly. The death of Christ wasn't just a death, it was an END. And end to what? An end to so much. And what we'll come to experience is an end to so much in us. What ended at the death of Jesus Christ? What was finished when he said "it is finished!"? Again, if all we see as finished here is the wrath of God towards sinners, then it really doesn't make much sense to know the cross as our own journey towards the fullness of God. Much more than that was finished.

When Christ died, he put away and buried the man of sin that He had become on our behalf. He became the Last-Adam in order to put away the adamic kind. What is the adamic kind? It's what you and I are by nature. It's the nature of our first birth, but not our new birth. Christ's death didn't take the punishment of God so that *Adam* could be restored to God. His death crucified Adam and separated him from God eternally. Adam, that kind, that man, that nature, that seed, is not reconciled to God. It is buried in the earth. And if you and I are to live to God in Christ, we will not live as a reconciled Adam. We will live reconciled to God only in and by Christ Himself. We are not reconciled to God in ourselves. We are reconciled to God in Christ. We are not reconciled to God as individuals. We are reconciled to God as the body of Christ. We are not reconciled to God as separate natural humans. We are reconciled to God as one new man, neither Jew or Gentile, but Christ all and in all. Your reconciliation with God is the One who calls Himself the resurrection and the life. Not the resurrection of Adam.

Christ is the one who was raised out from among the dead. It is Christ who returned to His Father bearing a people in Himself. But in that death, there was an end to Adam's kind. And though that nature still works in us because of darkness and blindness in the human soul, he is forever put away from God. The cross was the end of Adam, and God's relatedness to that man in covenant.

That is another thing brought to an end by the cross. The Old Covenant was brought to an end because it was fulfilled. I don't have time to explain the Old Covenant again today. We've done that a number of times. But suffice to say for this morning that that covenant was a relationship that God had with Israel wherein he dealt with them in the natural types and shadows that pointed to spirit and truth. He related to them in natural blood, and high priests, and feasts, and offerings, and kingdoms, all of which spoke beyond itself to spiritual realities that are "yes and amen" in Christ. IN the death of Christ comes an end to that covenant...even though it so often

continues in our hearts according to misunderstanding. But the cross ended it...not because God changed His mind, but because God fulfilled what had forever been on His mind.

And then there is the old creation, the natural creation. Though God did not literally destroy the earth in the cross of Christ, he raised a people up out from it, making them alive together, raised together, seated together with Christ in the heavens. We who died with Him are raised with Him, and growing up in Christ is growing in the experience of where we now are and what is true in Him. Our bodies remain on earth until they die. Our soul forever remains in Christ in heaven – from new birth onward.

All of these things, and more, came to a screeching stop at the cross. Again, they did not come to a stop in the earth. They came to a stop with regard to God's relationship to them. You have to hear this. **Adam lives on in the earth, but Adam does not live in Christ. The Old Covenant continues in the darkened unrenewed minds of men, but the Old Covenant has come to Spirit and Truth in Christ. The Old Creation is there when you open your eyes in the morning, but the Old Creation is not there when the Spirit of God opens the eyes of your heart and shows you what is now in Christ.**

All of these things were "finished" at the cross. All of these things were put away in His death. And it is PRECISELY these things that start to be taken away from our hearts as we bear in ourselves the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ. I said all of this so that I could just set up a discussion on bearing the dying of Christ. If we don't know that the cross is our journey towards fullness, then we can't even begin. If we don't know that the cross is the end of the old man, the old covenant, and the old creation that works in us, then we will not come to face the end of those things in our own soul.

When the Bible talks about dying daily, when it talks about carrying the cross, or being conformed to His death....it is not talking about my bad hair day. It is not talking about lessons learned through hardships, or convincing myself that I'm really dead. It is talking about my soul actually bearing in itself the death that Jesus died to sin. It is talking about my soul actually being conformed to His death, where what He ended finds an end in me. It is talking about Jesus' death to the old man, covenant, and creation, actually, literally, awakening in me because Christ is my life.

Please. Even if we don't understand all of this yet, we mustn't cheapen His cross by assuming it is less than it is. It is a cataclysmic end. It is an end that He has already borne in Himself long before He became your life. But when He who is free from sin is revealed in me, then I will come to know that freedom. When He who is dead to Adam is revealed in me, then I will come to know that liberty. When He who is dead to the world is revealed in me, then I will say with Paul "may it be that I would never boast except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ by whom the whole world was crucified to me and I to the world".

The death that works in us is a VERY specific end. It was designed by the Father. It was completed by the Son. It is revealed by the Spirit. It is not your end to smoking. It is not your end to yelling at your kids. It may work in you towards those ends. But it is defined and understood by the death that Christ died. And it will work in you according to what He has accomplished.

For this week, that is enough. It is enough if we come away with at least some understanding of what the death of Christ is and what it is not. Next week, the plan is to talk more about the way that death works in you and the liberty that you are brought to by death. Amen.