

## Knowing Christ's Resurrection Power and the Operation of the Cross

- 1 If I'd know Christ's risen power,  
I must ever love the Cross;  
Life from death alone arises;  
There's no gain except by loss.  
    If no death, no life,  
    If no death, no life;  
Life from death alone arises;  
    If no death, no life.
- 2 If I'd have Christ formed within me,  
I must breathe my final breath,  
Live within the Cross's shadow,  
Put my soul-life e'er to death.
- 3 If God thru th' Eternal Spirit  
Nail me ever with the Lord;  
Only then as death is working  
Will His life thru me be poured. (*Hymns*, #631)

This hymn, written by Witness Lee, unlocks the pattern of the Christian life—life arises out of death. If there is no death, there can be no experience of the resurrection life of Christ. From the beginning of the divine revelation this pattern is unveiled. All things are fresh and new when God created the heavens and the earth in the first verse of Genesis. Yet in the second verse the entire scene is dark and in death. It is out of this scene of death that the process of recovery, a type of resurrection, is carried out by God. Under God's direction, light overcomes the darkness, and life arises from the death waters. The Genesis narrative points to the fact of life coming out of death—a governing principle of life in the entire Bible. Death and darkness indicate that a situation is under God's judgment, but then resurrection restores and uplifts the situation.

In three short stanzas the above hymn unveils the principle of our experience of the resurrection life of Christ. In stanza 1 we are shown that in order to understand and participate in the power of Christ's resurrection, we must love the cross. The cross indicates that our fallen human life is under the judgment of God. Resurrection power and life come only after the judgment of death. The unique way to gain Christ is to lose everything of our soul-life. There is no gain except by loss. In stanza 2 the goal of our living as a believer is revealed; our aim must be the putting to death of the soul-life so that Christ can

be formed in us, becoming the very element of our human existence. Stanza 3 shows that the experience of coming out of death into life depends absolutely and indispensably on the eternal Spirit. He must apply the effectiveness of Christ's cross to us and release the subsequent dispensing of His resurrection life into us.

### Knowing the Power of Resurrection through Loving the Cross

The first stanza of the hymn declares, "If I'd know Christ's risen power, / I must ever love the Cross; / Life from death alone arises; / There's no gain except by loss." What is the significance of the cross in the life of a believer? What does it mean to love the cross? We know that the Lord Jesus was put to death on the cross. It was not simply a suffering that He passed through—it was His termination in relation to His human life. Apart from resurrection, death is the most powerful force known to man. All men must die (cf. Heb. 9:27; Rom. 5:12; 6:23). No one can escape. Humanly speaking, when death comes, life is over. The cross has one purpose—death. How then can one love the cross?

The first aspect of loving the cross is to love the One who first hung on the cross; His death on the cross was on our behalf. "The love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Cor. 5:14-15). He died, but a critical proclamation is added: "and has been raised." We love Him as the One who died on the cross on our behalf and has been raised. Because He died, we also have died; because He has been raised, we also are able to live in newness of life—"So then if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new" (v. 17). We embrace the cross because of our love for Him and our union with Him in death and resurrection.

A second aspect of loving the cross derives from the effectiveness of the cross in our life and living. We have seen that through the cross the physical life of Christ was terminated, but His death was also a victory, a prelude to His entrance into a new and uplifted existence in resurrection.

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Through death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus was transfigured to become the life-giving Spirit. His physical body from the old creation became a spiritual body in the new creation. The Bible unveils the nature of this transformation:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a soulish body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a soulish body, there is also a spiritual one. So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul"; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. (1 Cor. 15:42-45)

The terms *soulish body* and *spiritual body* are somewhat difficult to understand. A footnote on 1 Corinthians 15:44 in the Recovery Version is helpful:

A soulish body is a natural body animated by the soul, a body in which the soul predominates. A spiritual body is a resurrected body saturated by the spirit, a body in which the spirit predominates. When we die, our natural body, being soulish, will be sown, i.e., buried, in corruption, in dishonor, and in weakness. When it is resurrected, it will become spiritual in incorruption, in glory, and in power. (Lee, note 1)

Just as Christ was released from the limiting factors of the old creation and entered into a new existence out of death into resurrection in the new creation, so also we who are in Christ, who are enjoying the life of Christ, are delivered from the old to become living members in the new. Man's physical body of the old creation has been contaminated by sin, death, and corruption; it is dominated by a soul-life that is controlled by the sin nature, which was infused into it at the time of the fall of man. The first man, Adam, became a living soul. He is tied to the earth with all its limitations, depravity, and perversion. We all are of that old creation—that old Adam.

**T**he death of Christ was an all-inclusive death, terminating the old creation. Through His death on the cross, not only were our sins judged, propitiated, and forgiven, but we ourselves were also crucified with Christ. We died together with Him so that we may also live together with Him.

We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life. For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection. (Rom. 6:4-5)

When we love Him, and thereby embrace the cross in our life and living, we are experientially released from the bondage of sin and from the slavery of death. Through His death we are freed from death (Heb. 2:14-15). We find our greatest joy and emancipation when we are liberated from self, sin, Satan, and death through the action of the cross. Hence, we may "ever love the Cross." Then we will know the effectiveness of His risen power, the resurrected Christ moving and working in us. Then we can declare with rejoicing, "There's no gain except by loss."

### Christ Formed in Us Being the Goal of the Christian Life

Stanza 2 speaks of the goal of our Christian life—Christ being formed in us. Regrettably, this goal has been altogether obscured behind the many veils of doctrines, teachings, concepts, and practices in Christianity. Many of the current Christian customs and traditions obfuscate the purpose of God in His full salvation. Paul declares his considered estimation that One died for all so that those who live may no longer live to themselves. This should be the conclusion and commitment of every believer. But it does not require a great deal of observation for us to realize that nearly all the popular Christian teachings today focus on "What can God do for me?" Our believing results in the termination of our self-interests in order for God's purpose to be fully accomplished in us and through us. Stanza 2 of this hymn affirms, "If I'd have Christ formed within me, / I must breathe my final breath, / Live within the Cross's shadow, / Put my soul-life e'er to death."

**T**he goal of God is simply that Christ would be formed in us (Gal. 4:19). This is the purpose of our redemption and regeneration. We are not the center; Christ is the center. For His purpose to be fully achieved in us, we must breathe our "final breath"; that is, spiritually speaking, our old man must be terminated in our experience. The apostle Paul touches this principle in both Romans and Galatians.

In Romans 6:6, Paul says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." God in Christ has put to death our old man, including our old nature, our flesh, and our self-life; this was completed by Christ when we together with Christ were crucified on the cross of Calvary (Gal. 2:20). There is nothing left for us to do in this regard. Then in Galatians 5:24, Paul says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." Although the cross of Christ has terminated us with Him spiritually, we are still limited by the flesh in our body, our physical life. For this reason, we need to

exercise our spirit to cooperate with the Spirit to put to death the practices of the body. This is not to put to death the body itself but to put to death the practices of the body according to its fallen nature. Finally, in 4:19 Paul says, “I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you.” When we believed, Christ entered into us, but He has not yet been formed in us by the filling up of every part of our inner being. In an intimate and practical way we are mingled with Christ until He becomes us and we become Him in life, living, nature, and function. We do not and cannot become Him in His Godhead. However, we do become Him in life, constitution, and expression. This is God’s goal of forming Christ in us. And the distinctive and irreplaceable way to have Christ formed in us is by the practice of putting our soul-life to death, i.e., denying our self. The Lord spoke directly concerning the principle of death being a requirement for following Him: “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 16:24-25).

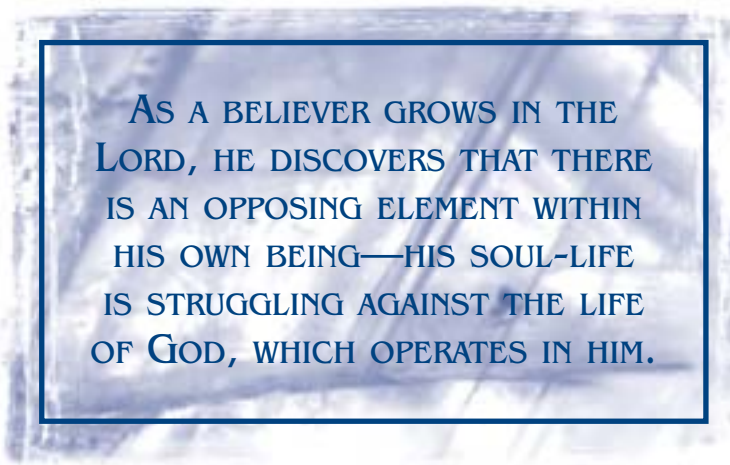
### Not Loving the Soul-life

Near the time of His betrayal, as part of His final fellowship with and teaching of His disciples, the Lord reiterated this principle as a necessary means to generate life, telling them that it is necessary for a grain of wheat to fall into the ground and die in order that it may produce many grains (John 12:24). He again spoke of this principle to those who aspired to follow Him—if anyone would follow Him, he must not love his soul-life (vv. 25-26). The word *soul-life* is a translation of the Greek word *psyche*. There are three different Greek words used in the Scriptures that are translated as “life” in English; these three words correspond to three distinctly different kinds of life. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* in its article concerning life briefly defines these three words.

Greek terms for life are principally *bíos*, *psyché*, and *zoé*. Of these, *bíos* is limited to the natural order. It is used of life span (Prov. 31:12, LXX) and of the financial resources essential for the sustenance of physical life (Lk. 21:4). It also involves such items as cares, riches, and pleasures (Lk. 8:14) or worldly goods (1 Jn. 3:17), and even life-style (1 Tim. 2:2). *Psyché* denotes self-conscious physical

existence...(Acts 20:10). *Zoé* can mean lifetime (Lk. 16:25). It also indicates life as the native possession of God (Jn. 5:26) and as His gift to mankind whereby people are able to feel, think, and act (Acts 17:25)...It often denotes life on the highest plane as redeemed and devoted to God (Jn. 10:10). It is the only term for life with which the adj. “eternal” is used (17:3). (3: 129)

The English word *life* is not sufficient by itself to illuminate in every instance the distinction in Greek associated with these three words. Hence, the Recovery Version translates the Greek word in Matthew 16:25 and in John 12:25 as “soul-life” when the Lord speaks of losing our life and not loving our life. The word *psyche* indicates the self-conscious physical existence—the soul-life or the self. The soul-life of each believer must be put to death in the present age by the work of the cross.



The instant that one believes in Christ and prays to receive Him as Savior, He as the divine life is dispensed into the believer. The Lord enters into the human spirit of a believer to be life and everything to him. This is the beginning of our knowing our Lord through our participation in Him. A true believer treasures this intimate joining with the Lord above all

else. Paul illustrates the treasuring of this precious encounter: “I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:8).

As the believer grows in the Lord, he discovers that there is an opposing element within his own being—his soul-life is struggling against the life of God, which operates in him. The soul-life must be rejected, and the cross must be applied to the self continually in order to truly gain Christ. Without losing our soul-life, there is no gaining of Christ. We must learn to “live within the Cross’s shadow, / Put my soul-life e’er to death.”

### The Application of the Cross by the Eternal Spirit

Stanza 3 presents the distinctive and irreplaceable means for the application of the cross and the consequent flow of the Lord’s poured-out life—the eternal Spirit: “If God thru th’ Eternal Spirit / Nail me ever with the Lord; /

Only then as death is working / Will His life thru me be poured.”

The Bible reveals that Christ has come from the Father to accomplish all that the Father has planned and willed according to His economy. Christ lived a human life by the life of the Father. He was under the cross during all His human living—denying Himself and living by the Father. After His human life had been lived out, He died an all-inclusive death on the cross. Through His death, He accomplished redemption, He destroyed the devil, and He redeemed His chosen people. Then He rose from the grave, and by the power of His resurrection life and in resurrection, He became the Firstborn from the dead, thus becoming the Firstborn among many brothers; He regenerated His chosen people, making them the many sons of the Father and the many brothers of the Firstborn; and He became the life-giving Spirit. All this He has fully accomplished. Now in our experience as believers, it is Christ as the life-giving Spirit who is actively applying all that Christ has accomplished. This is the power operating in us. This power of the resurrected Christ is the eternal Spirit, who now has entered into us to be fully joined with us.

We actively cooperate with Him by putting to death by the Spirit the practices of the body (Rom. 8:13). The power of resurrection is the Spirit Himself moving in us. The apostle was fully committed to pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus had called him upward (Phil. 3:14). For this cause, he focused his attention on the knowing of Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (v. 10).

The power of Christ’s resurrection is His resurrection life, which raised Him from the dead (Eph. 1:19-20). The reality of the power of Christ’s resurrection is the Spirit (Rom. 1:4). To know, to experience, this power requires identification with Christ’s death and conformity to it. Death is the base of resurrection. To experience the power of Christ’s resurrection, we need to live a crucified life, as He did. Our conformity to His death affords the power of His resurrection a base from which to rise up that His divine life may be expressed in us. (Lee, Recovery Version, Phil. 3:10, note 2)

We must exercise our spirit to cooperate with the Spirit of the indwelling Christ in us to put to death all the practices of the body. In this manner we crucify the flesh with its passions and its lusts. We must ever be mindful that it is God through the Spirit who operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure (2:13). We have nothing, we are nothing, and we can do nothing apart from Him. It is only through His working that our soul-life is put to death, and then through Him, the life of God is further outpoured upon and within us. “Only then as death is working, / Will His life thru me be poured.”

by Gary Kaiser

#### Works Cited

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### Denying the Self on the Pathway to Glory

In Matthew 16:24 the Lord said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” The cross is not merely a suffering; it is primarily a killing...Christ first bore the cross and then was crucified. We, His believers, have first been crucified with Him and then bear the cross today. To us, bearing the cross is to remain under the killing of the death of Christ for the terminating of our self, our natural life, and our old man. In so doing we deny our self that we may follow the Lord...

To take the pathway to glory ultimately means to put ourselves to death. This pathway is not only a matter of rejection, of experiencing the lack of necessities, of facing the storm on the sea, of encountering the accusations of religion, of learning to eat the Lord Jesus as the inexhaustible life supply, of being warned to beware of the leaven, and of seeing the vision of Christ and the church. In addition to all this, we need to be terminated. The last station of the pathway to glory is the station of self-termination...Matthew’s view covers rejection, necessity, the storm, the accusation from religion, the leaven, Satan, the self, the mind, and the soul-life. If you do not know how to face these things, it will be difficult for you to enter into glory. The last step before entering into glory is the termination of the self. It is not sufficient merely to pass through rejection or to experience the Lord’s supplying our material necessities. Also, it is not adequate to endure the stormy sea, to deal with the religious accusation regarding outward things, to feed on Christ, and to beware of leaven. Ultimately, the pathway to glory is a matter of being terminated.

From the *Life-study of Matthew* by Witness Lee, pp. 576, 578