

The Cross and Fruitfulness

by L.E. Maxwell

The Cross is the key to fruitfulness, and we must live it, sacrifice ourselves, and follow Jesus' example to experience deep life and unbroken communion with God.

Scripture: John 12:24, Romans 8:17, Galatians 3:1, Philippians 3:8

Topics: "Spiritual Fruitfulness", "The Cross"

Description

L.E. Maxwell emphasizes the profound connection between the Cross and spiritual fruitfulness, illustrating how true love and sacrifice reveal Christ to the world. Through the stories of Kohila and Mary, he demonstrates that embracing suffering and selflessness can lead others to Christ, as seen in the transformation of those around them. The sermon highlights that the way to draw souls to Jesus is through the Cross, which symbolizes sacrifice and death to self, ultimately leading to true life and fruitfulness. Maxwell calls for believers to live a life of self-oblation, understanding that only through dying to self can one truly live and bear fruit for the Kingdom. He challenges the church to move beyond superficiality and embrace the deeper call of Christ's sacrifice.

Transcript

FROM THE DOHNAVUR FELLOWSHIP in India comes this story. Various nurses had tried to interest a certain woman, but she had never been concerned about the Way. They were simply talking, she thought, and turned an unconcerned and uncomprehending face upon them till she saw Kohila nursing a sick baby. She said nothing for awhile. Then one day she said to her, "Why do you do it? Why do you work for this baby night and day? What makes you do it?" "It is nothing in me," said Kohila; "it is the love of my Lord Jesus. It is He who gives me love for this baby:" "I have heard talk about Him," said the woman, "but I thought it was only talk; now I have seen Him, and I know it is not mere talk." She listened and accepted Christ in truth, though she knew what it would cost when she returned home. Two months after she had returned home--a strong woman--she was dead. That death for her meant the end of what she had known must come--sharp persecution for the sake of her new-found Lord; not peace, but a sword. Before her unconcerned and uncomprehending face, Jesus Christ had been "evidently set forth crucified" in Kohila. It is only as we embrace and live the Cross that the world sees the Crucified today. There is a sense in which Christ must be "lifted up" in flesh and blood before the eyes of the world. Only thus can He still "draw all men."

In reminding the Galatians of the gospel he preached to them Paul says: "I placarded Christ crucified before your eyes" (Lightfoot). The writer's spiritual father was once falsely held up to the scorn and uncomprehending gaze of younger and untaught men. The lambhood of Christ was so exhibited by this man of God that some observers thought him both stupid and ignorant of the plotting of his foes. After the Lord had justified him discerning saints said, "Well, before their eyes Jesus Christ has been set forth crucified among them." Those who had observed the injustice and abuse heaped upon the old saint felt drawn afresh to the wounded side of their Redeemer. Robert Murray McCheyne says, "Men return again and again to the few who have mastered the spiritual secret, whose life has been hid with Christ in God. These are of the old-time religion, hung to the nails of the Cross."

Writing from her place of utmost suffering and exile in northern Siberia, "Mary" says, "There is a Godless Society here; one of the members became especially attached to me. She said, 'I cannot understand what sort of a person you are'; so many here insult and abuse you, but you love them all." She caused me much suffering, but I prayed for her. Later she asked me whether I could love her. Somehow I stretched out my hands toward her; we embraced each other, and began to cry. Now we pray together. Her name is Barbara."

A few months later another letter came from Mary telling of Barbara's bold confession before the Godless Society, and for which she was sent to prison. Mary says, "Yesterday for the first time I saw our dear Barbara in prison. She looked very thin, pale, and with marks of beatings. The only bright thing about her was her eyes, bright, and filled with heavenly peace and even joy. How happy are those who have it! It comes through suffering, hence we must not be afraid of any sufferings or privations. I asked her, through the bars, 'Barbara, are you not sorry for what you have done?' 'No,' she firmly responded, 'if they would free me, I would go again and tell my comrades about the marvelous love of Christ. I am very glad that the Lord loves me so much and counts me worthy to suffer for Him.'" (Quoted in Romans by Wm. Newell.) Note that the Lamb of God so indwelt Mary that Barbara caught her first glimpse of the supernatural Saviour, and was drawn unto Him. She could not understand, but she felt that Mary had a spiritual secret. Mary had embraced her cross. There Christ was seen. Mary's love for her enemies was the key which opened Barbara's heart.

O Christ! who once has seen Thy visioned beauty--

He counts all gain but loss,

And other things are naught if he may win Thee

And share with Thee Thy Cross.

And he on whom its shadow once has fallen,

Walks quietly and apart; He holds the master-key of joy and sorrow

That opens every heart.

The burdened souls that pass him on the highway

Turn back to take his hand,

And murmur low, with tear-wet eyes of anguish,

"You know--you understand."

-Annie Johnson Flint.

Oh to get men in touch with Christ! We must present Him. We must somehow give Him; not merely preach Him, but present Him. We must be so identified with Him that in a certain sense it may be true: "I that speak unto thee am he." And where shall He be seen except in death? The Cross is the supreme attraction. C. M. Ciow has said: "The symbol of the Christian church is not a burning bush, nor a dove, nor an open book, nor a halo round a submissive head, nor a crown of splendid honour. It is a Cross." We have met many who lightly sing:

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me;

All His wonderful passion and purity.

But jolliness may not reveal Jesus to others. Paul said: "Death worketh in us, but life in you." It never occurred to Paul that a "happified" kind of experience was the supreme attraction. God does need a much happier people, but "in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost" is infinitely deeper than jolliness and gush. There is only one way in which you and I can draw souls to Christ. That is by the way of the Cross, the way of sacrifice, the way of death. A Spirit-filled evangelist, much used and much abused, said concerning the secret of his fruitful ministry: "We personified Someone, and that was the attraction. I have not the insufferable conceit to suppose that it %vas anything in me that drew them. I said to Jesus: 'I will suffer anything if you will give me the keys.' And if I am asked what was the secret of our power, I answer: first, love; second, love; third, love. And if you ask how to get it, I answer: first, by sacrifice; second, by sacrifice; third, by sacrifice." The principle of the Cross must become our law of life. We must thirst for it as for living water. Let Christ be Lawgiver as well as Lamb. And let sacrifice be the law of our daily lives.

O cross that liftest up my head,

I dare not ask to fly from thee;

I lay in dust life's glory dead,

And from the ground there blossoms red

Life that shall endless be.

Certainly the great trouble with many of our orthodox churches is that they are like great grain containers, full of unplanted wheat which has become musty, and moldy, and befouled by the rats of envy and jealousy. If only each little grain had been rent asunder from its fellows, cast into the dark, wet earth, buried out of sight, and left alone to endure disintegration and death, what a harvest we would see!

Gospel groups of Christian young people have been multiplied during recent years. This is a cause for much rejoicing. But therein lies a grave danger. The group spirit, the fleshly attachment, the emotional and the natural--all tend to preserve us from becoming Cyod's isolated "corn of wheat." Joseph, the overcomer, learned to be a king "separate from his brethren"--learned during thirteen long years of isolation, slavery, suspicion and slander. Each Christian must learn to live and walk on his own two feet, go alone to his own funeral, climb his own Mount Moriah. The martyrs found it lonely work, and so shall we.

There is no gain but by a loss;
You cannot save but by a cross
The corn of wheat, to multiply,
Must fall into the ground and die.
Wherever you ripe fields behold,
Waving to God their sheaves of gold,
Be sure some corn of wheat has died,
Some soul has there been crucified;
Someone has wrestled, wept and prayed,
And fought hell's legions undismayed.

We appeal to those who are sick of the shallows and the shams, sick of doing dead things, "sick unto death" of a fruitless, barren existence. Oh barren soul, hear the word of the Lord: "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. Is the reader trying to live the Christian life?--work for Christ?--bear fruit, etc.? You cannot live until you have died. Death precedes life. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, once said: "We know how the Lord Jesus became fruitful--not by bearing His cross merely, but by dying on it. Do we know much fellowship with Him in this? There are not two Christs--an easy-going one for easy-going Christians, and a suffering, toiling one for exceptional believers. There is only one Christ. Are you willing to abide in Him, and thus to bear much fruit?" Death is still the gateway to life, life from the dead, life multiplied, life manifold. Self-oblation is still the law of self-preservation, and "self-preservation is the law of self-destruction." We can never escape the law, inexorable and eternal, that self-sacrifice is the condition of all multiplication of life.

Life everywhere replaces death,
In earth, and sea, and sky;
And that the rose may breathe its breath,
Some living thing must die.

Mrs. Penn-Lewis, whose writings have brought blessing to many, tells of a crisis in her life which came after her deliverance from the dominion of sin. While enjoying her happy, joyous experience, she began to read a volume on the Cross. She says,

As I read the book, I clearly saw the way of the Cross, and all that it would mean. At first I flung the book away, and said, "No, I will not go that path. I shall lose all my GLORY experience." But the next day I picked it up again, and the Lord whispered so gently. "If you want deep life, and unbroken communion, with God, this is the way." I thought, "Shall I? No!" And again I put the book away. The third day I again picked it up. Once more the Lord spoke, "If you want fruit, this is the path. I will not take the conscious joy from you; you may keep it if you like; but it is either that for yourself, or this and fruit.--Which will you

have?" And then, by His grace, I said, "I choose the path for fruitfulness," and every bit of conscious experience closed. I walked for a time in such complete darkness--the darkness of faith--that it seemed almost as if God did not exist. And again, by His grace, I said, "Yes, I have only got what I agreed to," and on I went. I did not know what the out-come of this would be, until I went to take some meetings, and then I saw the fruit. . . . From that hour I understood, and knew, intelligently, that it was dying, not doing, that produced spiritual fruit. . . . The secret of a fruitful life is--in brief--to pour out to others and want nothing for yourself: to leave yourself utterly in the hands of God and not care what happens to you.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/le-maxwell/the-cross-and-fruitfulness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net