

The Cross and the Crucified

by L.E. Maxwell

The sermon emphasizes the importance of union with Christ in His death and resurrection as the basis for a victorious Christian life and the power to overcome sin.

Scripture: John 15:5, Romans 6:6, Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 12:12, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:6, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 3:3, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 4:17

Topics: "Victory Over Sin", "Union with Christ"

Description

L.E. Maxwell's sermon 'The Cross and the Crucified' emphasizes the profound connection between Christ's crucifixion and the believer's spiritual life. He illustrates how, through Christ's death, believers are freed from the dominion of sin and are called to partake in His divine nature. Maxwell draws parallels between a father's longing to impart life to his son and Christ's desire to share His resurrected life with us, highlighting the necessity of a genuine union with Christ through His death. The sermon encourages believers to recognize their identity in Christ, asserting that true victory over sin comes not from self-effort but from a deep, faith-filled connection with the Crucified One. Ultimately, Maxwell calls for a surrender to Christ, allowing His life to flow through us as we embrace our co-crucifixion and resurrection with Him.

Transcript

THINGS DID NOT GO WELL in the home. The young man had an unhappy marriage. One day when they were out for a boat ride he accidentally (?) upset the boat and drowned his wife. But the law caught up with him and sentenced him to death for his crime. The last night before his execution his father was allowed to stay with him in his cell. The next morning the authorities led the son out to death. A few moments later they called for the old heart-broken father. As he stood there over the poor lifeless frame of his boy, he said, "Oh, my son, if only I could impart to you my life--if only I could put my life into you that you might become the man I had intended you to be."

Even so. Christ has for me an abundant fullness of life. He yearns over me that I may become partaker of His own divine nature--that I may become the Christian He has intended me to be. To this end He took on Him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, coming in my very frame and form. In the likeness of my own humanity, my very own, He took me up with Himself into the place of execution. Yes, He died my death. In His death I was discharged from sin, or, as Paul says, "justified from sin."

In Christ's dead body I behold sin's claim and power exhausted. "With Christ I have been jointly crucified." And just "death hath no more dominion over him," so God's promise to me is, "sin shall not have dominion

over you." "In Christ" crucified, I died. "In Christ" risen, I am resurrected. But He carries every mark of His death into His resurrection. Without His death He would not be the resurrected One. He now lives as the Crucified to make good the power and efficacy of His almighty death.

And I am a "partaker of Christ," grafted into Him as the branch into the vine. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." Did the first Adam, by virtue of my union with him, transmit to me the death-dealing effects of his disobedience? As truly does Christ transmit to me, by virtue of my life-union with Him, the vital effects of His obedience unto death. Christ died, not only for sin, but unto sin. In death He stripped sin of its last vestige of power. In the light of the Cross sin's dominion is "no more."

In living realization of my union with Him, I should say to temptation a NO that "carries with it the power of the inward presence of the risen Lord." Far more, then, than any broken-hearted father, does the Lord Jesus yearn to impart to us His own crucified-resurrected life--a life obedient unto death under the severest temptations and testings. For certain kinds of murder Roman law used to inflict an abominable and living death upon the red-handed criminal. He was fast-bound face to face to his victim until the murderer died.

Only death released him from the carcass. In a similar manner Christ fastened me to Himself by cords of a love stronger than death and carried me to the Cross where, with Him, I was "jointly crucified." Mrs. Penn-Lewis tells of a missionary who "had a dream that greatly impressed him. It was of the Cross of Christ. However, it was not the Savior's bleeding form which held his eye. It was an exceedingly ugly thing, an indescribably loathsome thing, the nature of which he could not make out.

What was this thing which so horrified him? Later, as he heard the message of identification, and realized that with Christ he had been crucified, the Spirit revealed to him that this loathsome thing he had seen in his dream, was none other than himself.' (F. J. Huegel in Bone of His Bone.) But we cannot experience this truth of our union with Christ in death and resurrection by a mere lip profession or determined assertion. This life cannot be copied or possessed by resolution to practice Christ's presence.

No imitation will avail. There must be a living participation by the Spirit through a new death to self. I cannot draw upon the life of the Crucified without admitting a new vital fellowship with Him in His death. I have the new life as I refuse the old--at the Cross. As I yield all to the power of His death I shall be "in the likeness of his resurrection." It is easy to work and fret and struggle and imagine that we are on the cross with Christ. In the energy of self we try to picture the nails driven hard into our flesh, thereby hoping to make vital the effects of His death.

Such is the folly and futility of the flesh. A Christless cross is of no avail either to Protestant or Catholic. Others, brushing aside the death of Christ, try to live as He lived, to follow His example, to walk and talk and "be like Jesus." But a crossless Christ brings no vital union with Him. In order to have life we must be joined to Christ. And we can be joined to Him only in and through His death.

A Christless cross no refuge were for me; A crossless Christ my Savior could not be:

But, O CHRIST CRUCIFIED, I rest in Thee!

But in coming to rest in Christ crucified as our life, our joy, our all, the Christian often goes through the bitter agonies of struggle and discouragement and defeat before coming to a glad consent to co-crucifixion. It is hard to unlearn self. Until we are sick unto death of sin, we have hard work to reckon

ourselves dead unto sin. We practice all manner of self-crucifixion, but to no avail. Self dies hard. In final captivity and thralldom to the "carcass" of self we are brought to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

In such an hour the Lord Jesus bends over us saying, My son, let me put the Spirit of life of my own resurrected Being into you that you may "be free indeed"--"free from the law of sin and death"--free to fulfill all that I have purposed you shall become. Oh, the blessed assurance that "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." It is not self-crucifixion but union with Christ in His death and resurrection that lays the basis for Christian victory.

The Crucified LIVES to make real His own mighty death. The story is told of a wealthy Christian merchant who had an only son whom he loved dearly, and who grew into noble young manhood. The father was wrapped up in his son's future and success. One night a boy who had led a criminal life from childhood broke into the home and attempted to kill the son. For days it seemed that the son would not live. But when he became conscious and was able to hear of what had occurred, he was shown the picture of the boy who had attempted to take his life.

His heart was touched by the youthfulness of the lad. A desire was awakened in the son to try to save this lad from a life of crime. The father finally consented to the suggestion that the young criminal be taken into the home, adopted as a son and brother, and in time share the inheritance. It was with great difficulty that the young criminal was persuaded of their sincerity. Finally convinced, he agreed to their proposal. Old habits, however, had such a hold upon him that time after time he fell back into evil ways, until the father almost despaired of ever being able to help him.

But father and son, in spite of discouragement, held on and lavished their blessings upon him. One day at the height of the father's despair he went into the criminal boy's room and there noticed a picture of his own son. He picked it up and scanned it. The picture bore the marks of much thumbing and handling, and on the back of it was written "Oh, I do so want to be like you, because you have done so much for me; but it seems as if I never can be good." Hope sprang up in the father's breast.

His efforts were finally rewarded when the one-time criminal became "good." Have you longed and sighed to be Christ-like? You have said to the Lord Jesus, "Oh, I do so want to be like Thee, because Thou hast done so much for me; but it seems as though I never can be good." Beloved, begin at once to reckon upon your death-resurrection position in Christ. Count by naked faith upon the fact of your union with Christ. In blind abandonment, as far as feelings are concerned, move out by a definite act of faith, trusting Christ to make real your life-union with Him.

Sink your life into His, and let Him be your life, your light, your victory, your all. Remember, your living, crucified HEAD is in Heaven. Head and members at one. That is a fact of life. You and I are "bone of His bone." Let the glory of this vital union grip you and you can never be the same again. The rules of mathematics fail us here. Ordinarily one and one make two. But with God one and one make ONE. "They two shall be one flesh." And Paul explains, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:31, 32).

And "as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (I Cor. 12:12). "The whole Christ includes both Head and body" (Augustine). Martin Luther made this practical observation: "The moment I consider Christ and myself as two I am

gone." Let us then be so experimentally one with Christ that we shall be one in interest, one in service, one in outlook--altogether one with the Crucified, having "two hearts that beat as one."

Dr. A. T. Pierson says: "A devout woman whom I once visited, to condole with her on the recent departure of an aged and most saintly mother, said to me with a smile: 'For forty years, my dear mother's mind has been in Heaven.' And I could not but recall those exquisite lines of Goldsmith:

Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale but midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Let our earthly dwelling place be amidst briars and thorns, and our skies be overcast. Faith feeds on the fact that "eternal sunshine settles" on our Head. Our "life is hid with Christ in God." He and I are one, and "as he is (in yonder glory) so are we in this world" (I John 4:17).

A letter just at hand from one of our graduates so well illustrates the truth that we quote it in part:

I praise God for making known unto me that the riches of Christ are mine by grace, accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ. So long I struggled to get to a place where it wouldn't be this everlasting up and down existence. I earnestly desired a victorious Christian life but the more I worked for it, the more miserable I became. I tried to attain unto it by prayers, obedience, resolutions and vows, but all to no avail. I had been saved from the guilt of sin by faith in Christ. Why should I have been so stupid as to think that by works I could be saved from the power of sin? The fact that my deliverance could come only through faith, as I appropriated the death and resurrection of Christ, never dawned upon my soul. Not until January of this year did the truth of my identification with Christ's death dawn upon me. I believe I saw for the first time what Paul meant when he said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." I praise the Lord for the Cross; for when all hope failed of ever shaking off the fetters of sin, through the Cross I rose victor over the power of sin. When nothing else could avail, death set me free.

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