

THE CROSS AND THE OLD MAN

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Romans 6:6—Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for gathering us together this morning. We do gather unto Thy holy name. We do thank and praise Thee that where Thy name is, there is Thy presence. Dear Lord, we are in Thy very presence. We stand on holy ground. We want to remove our shoes before Thee. We want to prostrate ourselves before Thee and say, "Lord, what hast Thou to say to us? Thy servants heareth." We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

We do thank the Lord for gathering us together this time. We know that we are living in the last days. The coming of our Lord Jesus is so near, and this is the time that we should all be prepared to meet Him face to face. And that is the reason why we are gathered here.

Our theme is "The Way to the Eternal Purpose of God—the Cross." Even though our emphasis this time will be on the cross, I hope that we still remember that the cross is only a means to an end; the cross is not the end. The end is God's eternal purpose; we must not forget that and we must put that before us all the time.

What is God's eternal purpose? To put it very simply, God's eternal purpose is concerning His own Son. He wants His Son to have the first place in all things. It is God's will to sum up, to gather up all things in Christ Jesus—the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. His heart is centered upon His beloved Son. And because of His love for His Son, He gave His Son a precious gift. That gift is the church; that we, the redeemed, should become the bride of the Lamb. So the eternal purpose of God is simply this: Christ and the Church. There is only one way to arrive at this eternal purpose of God. There is no other way to arrive at God's eternal purpose except the way of the cross. The cross is God's prescribed way unto His purpose, and we must go by that way because this is the only way that will lead us back to God's eternal purpose.

We know that the cross was originally a sign of shame, of curse, of death. And why is it that today the cross has become a sign of blessing, of glory, and of victory? It is not because of the cross itself; it is because of Him crucified. It is our Lord Jesus who changes the cross from shame to glory, from curse to blessing, from death to victory. So as we fellowship on this matter of the cross, it is not the cross itself; it is Christ crucified. Therefore, we must keep our Lord Jesus Christ always before us. The reason we must go by way of the cross is because it leads us to Christ; it leads us to the church; it leads us to God's eternal purpose.

This time the emphasis is more on what the cross means to us. Therefore we emphasize the cross and the world—how the cross delivers us from the world. We emphasize the cross and the law—how we are delivered from the law by the cross, that we may be married to another One, our Lord Jesus Christ. We will fellowship on the cross and the flesh because unless the flesh is put to death, Christ will not be increased in us.

My responsibility is on the cross and the flesh. We would like to approach this from three areas: the cross and the old man, the cross and the flesh, and finally the cross and the self-life.

OUR SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN

This time we will center upon the cross and the old man. May we read Romans 6:6 again. "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin."

We would like to approach this matter from the personal, experiential side. We know the book of Romans gives us a full account of the glad tidings of God. How do we approach the glad tidings of God from our personal standpoint? Of course, first of all, we have to realize that we have sinned. Not only does the word of God tell us so, but the Spirit of God will convict us of our sin. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." There is no exception.

What is sin? Sin is coming short of the glory of God. Sin is: not being like God, because it is the will of God that we should be like Him. He created us according to His image, after His likeness, and He is willing to give His own life to us, that we may be transformed and conformed to the image of God's Son. This is the will of God for us, and anything that is short of that is sin in the sight of God. So as we were convicted by the Holy Spirit of our sins, how should that problem be solved? The book of Romans tells us it is the precious blood of our Lord Jesus that will cleanse us from all our sins. It is by the blood of our Lord Jesus that we are justified before God. We can stand before God not because of what we have done, nor because of our merits; it is because of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I believe all who are here (hopefully there is no exception), have all experienced the precious blood of our Lord Jesus.

Thank God He has forgiven us our sins. Thank God He has given us a new life. Thank God we have a living relationship with God today. As a matter of fact, we are in favor before God. In Romans 5:1-11, we find that we have been justified by the blood of our Lord Jesus and we now boast in hope of the glory of God, knowing how He died for us when we were yet sinners. Now how much more that we should live by Him! So we really boast in God, thinking that now everything is solved. We can go on and on until we reach glory.

But to our surprise, when our first love began to wane, we discover that we are not fully saved from sin. Our sins in the plural number may be forgiven, but we find that the power of sin is still upon us. Because of that, unfortunately we find ourselves continuing to commit sin, and we do not know the reason for it. We want to do the will of God, but what we want to do, we cannot do; what we do not want to do, we do it. And I believe we have all gone through this period. Sometimes we begin to doubt whether we are saved or not, but we do know that we believe in the Lord Jesus; we know we are saved. But why is it that the power of sin is still upon us? How can we be delivered from the power of sin? This is something that we find in Romans from chapter 5 verse 12 on.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ONE AND MANY

In order to understand the situation, there is a principle that we have to understand first, found in Romans 5:12-21. It is the principle of "one and many." Because of the offense of one man, all were condemned, but thank God, because of one Man's righteousness, all will be justified. In the sight of God, there are only two men. Through the ages, in the whole world, in God's sight, there are only two men. The first man is Adam, and the second Man is Christ. All those who are born into this world are in Adam and all who will be reborn in Christ will be in the second Man. This is God's way. So even though there are countless people in this world, in the sight of God there is only one man, and that is Adam, our father. Every one of us is in him. And because Adam sinned, we have all sinned. We know that Adam became a sinner because he committed sin, but we, the sons and daughters of Adam, when we were born, we were sinners. And because we were sinners, therefore we sinned. So even though our sinful acts have been washed away, cleansed by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus, we as sinners were still there. That is the reason why we continue to sin. So the problem now is not with sin; the problem now is with the sinner. How can we sinners be delivered?

DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF SIN

Romans 5:18—“So then as it was by one offence towards all men to condemnation, so by one righteousness towards all men for justification of life.” That is what happened when we believed in the Lord Jesus; we were justified.

Verse 19—“For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous.”

Verse 19 tells us how we became sinners, not because we sinned but because of Adam. Because of one man, that is, Adam, the many have been constituted sinners. So the problem today is the old man.

Who is this old man? A dear brother, H. C. G. Moule, said, “All that you were as the unregenerated sons of Adam is the old man.”

And Theodore Monod had another definition, and I think it is a very, very simple one. He said, “The old man is the man of old.” So who is the old man? Of course it is Adam and then all who are in Adam, because Adam is more than just an individual. He is a corporate man; he is the head of a federation. So we who were born into this world, we were all in Adam. And because Adam sinned, sin came into the life of Adam and sin ruled over that life. And we who were born to Adam were born with sin in our soul and it ruled over us. So unless we are delivered from Adam, unless we are delivered from the old man, there is no way to overcome sin because we are under its power. So when we come to this matter of how we can be delivered from the power of sin, we have to be delivered from the old man, from Adam.

How do we get into Adam? We get into Adam by birth. How can we get out of Adam? There is only one way, and that is through death. So here you find the gospel, the salvation that God has provided for us. When we come to this practical matter of how we can be delivered from the power of sin, we have to go back to the old man. We have to go back to Adam.

THE SECOND MAN AND THE LAST ADAM

Now we can see the marvelous work of God because in the word of God 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that the first man is Adam and the second Man is Christ, but the second Man is also the last Adam. So you find when our Lord Jesus came into this world, the Word became flesh and tabernacles among men, full of grace and truth. God became Man, and as He came to become a man, He became the last Adam. Being the last Adam and at the same time the second Man, salvation is centered upon Him. We ourselves have no way to wash away our sins, and in like manner, we ourselves have no way to be delivered from the power of sin. We can try, but we cannot. So the only way that we can find deliverance from the power of sin is through Christ Jesus because He came into this world as the last Adam and also the second Man. In other words, He is the one who concludes the first man, and He is the one who introduces the second Man. And that is one reason why we find our Lord Jesus had to be crucified. On the cross, He bore our sins in His body and because of His shed blood, judgment came upon Him and we are being saved. But not only had that, at the same time, as the last Adam, when He died on the cross, the Adamic race come to an end in Him.

In *The Normal Christian Life* our brother Nee used an illustration. I think it is very evident, especially to the Chinese, because we always trace our beginning to the Yellow Emperor. The Chinese race came from the Yellow Emperor. According to legend, once there was a battle, a war between the Yellow Emperor and Zhu-Yeu. During that battle there was heavy fog around. How can you fight in heavy fog? Fortunately, Yellow Emperor invented the compass, and because he had the compass, he was able to fight to victory, and Zhu-Yeu was killed. Suppose during that battle the Yellow Emperor did not have the compass and he was killed by Zhu-Yeu. Then brothers and sisters of the Chinese race, where would you be? There would be no you or me because he is our federal

head. So when he died, we would all die because we were all in him. But fortunately, he lived, and that is how you and I are here. I think this is a good illustration to show us that we do have a federal head.

There is another illustration we can use. In China today, when a person passes away, his name will be on the tombstone. Above is his surname, which will be black, and following it will be his own name in red. Why? It is because he has died but his family still has some people living to bear that surname. But suppose you are the last of that family and you die, then even the surname will be in red because that family is finished. So I believe people know about such things, that you are not just yourself; you have a root, and we all belong to that root.

So God used a marvelous way to deliver us from the power of sin. When our Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, oftentimes we only know a part of what He has done for us. We only know that part of how He bore our sins in His body and died for us. In other words, He is our substitute, but we oftentimes neglect the other part, that He died as the last Adam. When He died, the whole Adamic race was terminated in Him. So far as God is concerned, this Adamic race is finished, and we who were in Adam died in Christ and with Christ. Put it in another way: when Christ went to the cross, He took all of us with Him, so when He died, we too died. He died not only as our substitute; He died as our representative. He died not only *for* us; He died *as* us. When He died, we died too. The Adamic race is finished. So when He was raised from the dead as the second Man, then we all are being raised together with Him. In Romans 6, we find how we were identified with Him in His death and identified with Him in His resurrection.

KNOWING THIS

Now read Romans 6. It says, “Knowing this....” This is a spiritual knowledge that we must have. Knowing this—knowing that something has been done. It is concerned more with what we call objective truth.

What is objective truth? Objective truth is what God has done in Christ Jesus. All that our Lord Jesus has done on Calvary’s cross is objective truth. It is not in any way affected by circumstances or by you and me. What Christ has done on the cross is once forever, because in the sight of God it is finished. You cannot take away from it; you cannot add anything to it. It is true for all ages. It will not be affected by time or space. So when Christ died two thousand years ago, in the sight of God all the sins of the world have been redeemed. Whether your sins are forgiven or not, in your personal experience you have to believe, but in the sight of God it is all prepared. The same thing is true when Christ died on the cross. He died not only as an individual person; He died as the corporate man. So when He died, the entire Adamic race died. In the sight of God, the Adamic race is finished. But of course, in our experience we have to know and believe. So first of all, we need to know this eternal truth, and this eternal truth is very simple. When Christ died, you died in Him.

Again, in *The Normal Christian Life* our brother Watchman Nee gave his personal experience. He was saved and for seven years after he was saved, he struggled over this matter. He knew that his sins were forgiven, but he discovered that after he had believed in the Lord Jesus, he continued to sin. He did not want to, but he could not help it. So he struggled over this matter for seven years. He fasted, he prayed, and he asked people’s help. And whenever he asked for help, he was told, “You must reckon yourself as dead to sin.” So he said he tried to reckon himself as dead to sin, but the more he reckoned, the more lively is the power of sin. And he struggled over this matter for a long time. He even came to the point that if he could not be freed from sin, he should not preach anymore.

One day he was in his room reading the word of God and suddenly a light came to him. He saw that God has put him in Christ; so when Christ died, he too died. It is not a matter of how he will die; it is a matter that two thousand years ago, he was already dead. It is in Christ. And when he saw that, to reckon himself as dead to sin was simple because it is reckoning upon a fact; it is not reckoning upon a feeling. He was so emancipated. He walked downstairs and met the brother who worked in the kitchen. He laid hold on him and said, "Brother, do you know that I have died?" And that brother looked at him. He could not understand what he meant. Brother Nee said he wanted to go through all the streets of Shanghai and shout that he had died.

This is "knowing this." We need to know this. This knowing is not just a mental understanding. If you only understand this mentally and you try to reckon yourself as dead, you find that you are more alive. But if you know this in your spirit, the Lord opens your understanding, and in your spirit you see the cross. You see Christ crucified, and you see your old self in Him. You see that when He died, you died. This is an eternal fact. It is done. You do not need to do anything. You just reckon it as true, and it becomes very easy. And when you reckon yourself as dead unto sin and alive unto God, do not forget it is in Christ. Whenever you turn to yourself, it is not true because the truth is not there; the truth is in Christ Jesus. So you only reckon it in Christ Jesus, and you find how it is true.

THE SIN NATURE ISOLATED

So Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him..." And then what happened? "...that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin."

I was saved among the Holiness people, and among the Holiness people there was a teaching: "We need a second blessing. The first blessing is when you confess your sins, believe in the Lord Jesus, and have your sins forgiven. But you need a second blessing. And the second blessing is when the root of sin in you is eradicated. When that root of sin is eradicated, then you sin no more." I was saved among these people. But unfortunately, even in that very conference, the founder of that organization lost her temper among the crowd. But they have a kind of reasoning: "This is not sin; this is weakness." And I just could not accept it.

The way to be delivered from sin is not by eradication. Sin, as a power, will be in us until we die. As long as we still live on this earth, it is there. So what is God's way of deliverance? God's way of deliverance is not eradication; God's way of deliverance is isolation.

So it says in Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin." Sin here is a power. We know that after our forefather Adam sinned, sin as a power came into his life and sin became the master of his being. And this sin dwells in our soul, dwells in our old man. Our old man is like a steward. Sin as the master will give his command to the old man, and the old man will relay that command to this body because this body is now a body of sin. To sin is the work of this body.

THE BODY OF SIN IS ANNULLED

What is the way of deliverance? Instead of rooting out the sin from us—it is still there—the way of deliverance is putting the old man to death. In other words, when sin gives his command, nobody is receiving that command, and because nobody receives that command, the body of sin is annulled. Annulled does not mean "annihilated;" it means "unemployed." This body was employed by sin, and now this body is unemployed. That is the way that we no longer serve sin.

So brothers and sisters, we thank God for His marvelous way of deliverance that He uses the way of isolation. He will allow sin to still be there. I think He has a good reason for it. We have to be

careful, we have to be humble, and yet, sin is so isolated that it cannot work any more, and our body of sin is unemployed.

RECKON THE OLD MAN AS DEAD

After you have known this thing, then the first step will be in Romans 6:11: “So also ye, reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

First, you see the old man is dead, and then you reckon it as dead in Christ Jesus and also reckon yourself as alive to God. This is faith. Faith is based upon fact, not upon feelings, because whenever you begin to look into feelings, you will find that your old man is very much alive because you have gotten out of Christ. But whenever you look at Christ, you find that your old man is dead and you are alive in Christ Jesus. This is the first step.

THE BODY OF SIN IS UNEMPLOYED

Here is the second step. How about this body? This body is now unemployed. Now he needs to be reemployed. So in verse 13, it says, “Neither yield your members instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as alive from among the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to God.”

Since this body of sin has been unemployed, there is no reason why you should still yield to unrighteousness. What do you do now? You seek new employment. You yield yourself to God as alive from among the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. What will be the result? “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace.”

So we do thank the Lord for His perfect salvation. He not only forgives all our sin, but He opened the way for us to be delivered from the power of sin, that He even will accept us to serve Him. Even in our daily life we can live righteously unto holiness. This is the salvation of the Lord, and this is the foundation upon which we can talk about the cross and the flesh, and the cross and the self-life. So may the Lord help us.

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for Thy perfect salvation, because Thou hast not only borne our sins in Your body and by the shedding of Thy precious blood our sins were forgiven, Thou hast also made provision for us to overcome even the power of sin, that we may live a life holy and righteous unto Thyself. We do pray that this will not be just mental understanding to us. We pray that Thou will reveal Thy cross so vividly to each and every one of us that we may be drawn into all the goodness of it. We want to glory in the cross of Jesus Christ. We ask in Thy precious name, Amen.