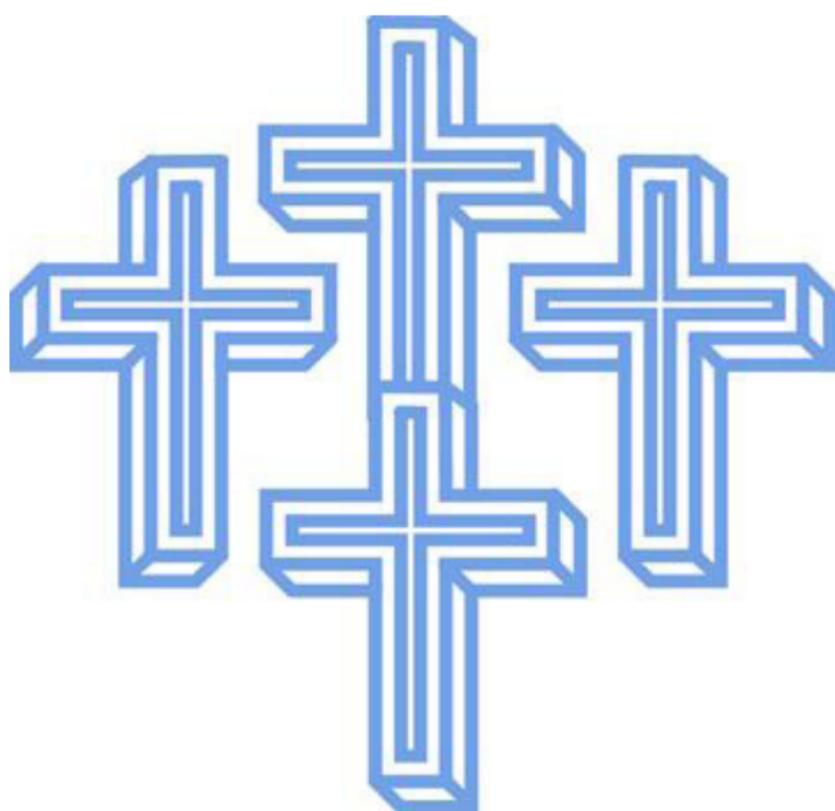


# THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF THE CROSS



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## THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF THE CROSS

Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada is not a particularly spiritual city, yet it has a distinctive Christian symbol adorning the ridge above it. When we lived there, I often viewed the cross. Lined with lights, its presence is also noticeable at night. To many, it is just a religious monument or community landmark; but to those who know Christ, it symbolizes God's redemptive love in Christ. I had assumed the structure was ten feet high, then I discovered that it was three times larger!

Similarly, many today underestimate the Cross. Maybe this comes from a lack of understanding. Why did Christ have to die? Was He just a martyr? A noble example? What does the Scripture mean when it speaks of Christian being *crucified with Christ*? How are we to *take up our cross daily*?

If we value abundant living, we can't escape the centrality of this theme. Paul declared:

*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal. 6:14).*

Let's examine four 'dimensions' of the Cross:

**DIMENSION 1:  
THE CROSS OF CHRIST  
IS OUR MEANS OF PARDON**

This is the most familiar aspect of the Cross for the child of God. Those of us who have experienced the grace of salvation never tire of contemplating Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Through the Cross, Christ solved the problem of our condemnation before God. This spiritual malady is spelled out in our own conscience and in the Scriptures. None of us can escape this indictment:

*for all have sinned and fall short  
of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).*

And what is the judicial consequence of our sin?

*For the wages of sin is death  
(Rom. 6:23a).*

Thankfully the Gospel adds,

*but the gift of God is eternal life  
in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom.  
6:23b).*

When Christ began to predict His crucifixion, His disciples were stunned and confused. Peter even rebuked Jesus, claiming:

*Far be it from You, Lord; this  
shall not happen to You! (Matt.  
16:21-23).*

They couldn't grasp why the Messiah would face a horrific execution. Why was such suffering necessary?

The Bible gives us the profound answer to the 'why' of the Cross: Christ's sacrifice was the only way a perfectly just God could pardon sinners. As Paul stated,

*[Believers are] justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation [atoning sacrifice] by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:24-28).*

How true that, *He came to pay a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay.*

Centuries before the birth of Jesus, God foretold that the Messiah would die a sacrificial death for us:

*All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Is. 53:6).*

In *The Cross through the Scriptures*, F. J. Huegel highlights this Old Testament chapter:

*Nowhere in the whole realm of prophecy does Calvary's cross loom before us in such bold relief as in Isaiah 53. Had the prophet stood at the foot of the cross he could not have given to the world a more exact account of what took place.*

Huegel went on to illustrate this by the testimony of a missionary to South America:

*Solomon...was born of Jewish parents in Austria. One day, as a boy, he went to his father and asked of whom the prophet spoke in Isaiah 53. For an answer he was given a blow in the mouth...Why such anger? The boy Solomon could be insinuating that there was a bare possibility that the prophet spoke of Jesus. Later, as a young man, Solomon went to London to work, where one day he was invited to a meeting of Hebrew Christians, the theme of the gathering being Isaiah 53. He thought he would attend the meeting to see what answer these fellow Jews had to this question. He had not forgotten his father's answer. The result was Solomon's conversion. He later married in the U.S.A. and then answered God's call to Brazil where he and his wife spent their years preaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>*

How powerful is this first dimension of the Cross—Jesus died to purchase our pardon. As the New Testament declares:

*For He [God the Father] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21; Cf. 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18).*

How do we partake of Christ's sacrifice? Is it through a church's sacrament? Through good works? No, indeed; we must repent and receive Christ by faith as Lord and Savior:

*That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9,10).*

This salvation is by God's amazing grace:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Eph. 2:8,9).*

In *Planet In Rebellion*, George Vandeman recalled an act of selfless heroism:

*It was May 21, 1946. The place—Los Alamos. A young and daring scientist was carrying out a necessary experiment in preparation for the atomic test to be conducted in the waters of the South Pacific... He had successfully performed such an experiment many times before. In his effort to determine the amount of U-235 necessary for a chain reaction—scientists call it the critical mass—he would push two hemispheres of uranium together. Then, just as the mass became critical, he would push them apart with his screwdriver, thus instantly stopping the chain reaction. But that day, just as the material became critical, the screwdriver slipped! The hemispheres of uranium came too close together. Instantly the room was filled with a dazzling bluish haze. Young Louis Slotin, instead of ducking and thereby possibly saving himself, tore the two hemispheres apart with his hands and thus interrupted the chain reaction. By this instant, self-forgetful daring, he saved the lives of the seven other persons in the room... as he waited...for the car that was to take him to the hospital, he said quietly to his companion, 'You'll come through all right. But I haven't the faintest chance myself.' It was only too true. Nine days later he died in agony.*

2,000 years ago, the Lord Jesus laid down His life for us on the Cross so we could be eternally rescued. He has broken the power of sin once for all time (Heb. 10:10).

Christ's death on our behalf is the supreme demonstration of divine love. Friend, do you ever doubt God's love for you? We are reassured by looking to the Cross. This revelation sustained Henry Blackaby during a difficult time. In the *Experiencing God* course, he recalled the trial his family went through when his daughter contracted cancer:

*Carrie's cancer treatments could have been a very devastating experience for us. Was God loving us still? Yes. Had His love changed? No...Long before this experience with Carrie I had made a determination no matter what the circumstances, I would never look at those circumstances except against the backdrop of the cross...In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God forever convinced me that He loved me.<sup>2</sup>*

Blackaby's confidence was firmly based on revealed truth:

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8; Cf. 1 John 3:16; 4:10).*

Have you experienced this first dimension of the Cross? Isaac Watt's hymn is a fitting testimony for those

who have taken refuge in Christ's sacrifice:

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small:  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

In part one we examined Christ's sacrificial death *for* us. Perhaps we can compare this to the *height* of that 30' cross that overlooks Stoney Creek, Ontario. Christ's atonement on Calvary reaches from heaven to earth to redeem all who receive Him as Lord and Savior. Now we come to dimension two.

**DIMENSION 2:  
THE CROSS OF CHRIST  
IS OUR MEANS OF RENEWAL**

Not only has Christ died for us, *but we have died with Christ!* This is like the *width* of the Cross—it reaches every aspect of our nature. When I first

learned about this, I wondered, “how could I have died with Christ 2,000 years ago, when I wasn’t born until the 20th century?” Consider first what this *doesn’t mean*. First, this union does not mean that we were preexistent. We were not personally present like the thief on the Cross (Luke 23:40).

Second, many teach that our co-crucifixion with Christ was only positional. This is compared to our justification, in which God declares us righteous based on the merits of Christ’s righteousness and sacrifice. (Justification relates to our position—our righteous standing before a holy God [Rom. 5:1]). Similarly, some would see our death *with* Christ as only positional.

However, it is more than positional; it is also *spiritual* and *experiential*.

Our spiritual union with Christ has many wonderful and radical implications. Consider four of them.

- 1. We were united to Christ in His death.** As Paul wrote, *knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him...; For you die...you have put off the old man with his deeds,...; I have been crucified with Christ...* (Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:3,9; Gal. 2:20). Our union with His death means that we have been taken out of Adam’s line and placed into Christ’s line. We have become something we were not before! Through co-crucifixion with Christ, the believer is severed from the condemnation of the law! (Rom. 8:1). This is more than positional crucifixion because

it is based upon our spiritual union with Christ: *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him* (1 Cor. 6:17).

- 2. We were united with Christ in His burial.** *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death* (Rom. 6:4). And Colossians 2:12 states that believers were, *buried with Him in baptism...* Through co-burial with Christ, the believer is severed from the power of sin. The old life no longer has any claim on us!

Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasized that our death with Christ set us free from sin's authority: *'Our old man was crucified with Him' is the message of Calvary to the fallen sinner, and is the secret of deliverance from the bondage of sin. All who were baptized into Christ 'were baptized into His death'. Through 'baptism into death' they were buried into His grave for the express purpose 'that like as Christ was raised from the dead' they might look upon His cross and grave as a great gulf fixed between them and their past, and with the Risen Christ emerge to 'walk in newness of life.' ...Sin has no longer a claim to reign—its tyranny is over.*<sup>1</sup>

- 3. We were united to Christ in His resurrection:** *If [since] then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is...you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God* (Col. 3:1-3). Through co-resurrection with Christ, the believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, made a partaker of

the life of God, and grafted into the True Vine (Eph. 1:13; 1 John 5:9-11; John 15:1-5; Cf. Rom. 5:10).

Not only were we severed from sin's penalty and power, we have a new life source through Christ Who indwells us. Evan Hopkins wrote in his, *Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life: A bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Regeneration is essential in order that the fruit should be good. But the new nature is not the source. There is only one source of all holy living: there is only one holy Life. 'From Me is thy fruit found' (Hosea 14:8). 'I am the life', not simply because I am the pattern of perfect life, or because I am the bestower of the gift of life, nor yet because I am the vital principle itself. Christ is the Spring itself. 'With Thee is the fountain of life' (Ps. 36:9). It is Christ living within us. 'Not I', says the apostle, though I am redeemed. 'Not I', though I am regenerate, and have eternal life. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).*<sup>2</sup>

- 4. We have ascended with Christ.** *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-7). Through co-ascension with Christ we are partakers of Christ's authority!*

Rom. 5:12-21 unfolds a profound series of parallels between the headship of Adam and the headship of Christ. We sinned in Adam (Rom. 5:12) yet (through the new birth) are made righteous in Christ (Rom. 5:18). Adam's sin brought spiritual death to his descendants; Christ's redemptive work has brought spiritual *life* to His people (5:15,17). Adam's fall brought misery and bondage; Christ's redemption brought us salvation and victory:

*...where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:20,21).*

Just as you were not personally present in Eden, yet *sinned in Adam* (inheriting a dead spiritual nature), so you were *crucified with Christ* (gaining a living, spiritual nature) by virtue of your union with Christ. We see glimpses of God's renewing power in creation. For example, the caterpillar 'dies' to its identity and nature as a crawling, fuzzy, earth bound, plant-munching, local insect when it goes through its metamorphosis. From the cocoon emerges a creature with a changed identity—a butterfly! This insect has beautiful colors, can fly, consumes a different diet, and can migrate hundreds of miles! This is a picture of the transforming power of our death *with Christ*:

The Four Dimensions of the Cross

*...we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Cor. 14b, 17).*

According to Rom. 7:22, our new nature,

*delights in the law of God in the inner man.*

So the apostle John indicated that sin no longer arises from our new man:

*Whoever has been born of God does not sin [from his spirit], for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God (1 John 3:9).<sup>3</sup>*

Then, why do we still need to resist the temptation to sin? (James 1:14; 3:2). Our nemesis is the *flesh* (not the *old man*):

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another... (Gal. 5:17).<sup>4</sup>*

Our resource for victory over the flesh is the power of the Holy Spirit:

*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).*

To gain practical benefit from these truths, we must *reckon* on them by faith (Rom. 6:11). However, *knowing* precedes *reckoning*. Watchman Nee pointed out the need for claiming this assurance by faith:

*Praise the Lord, when He [Christ] died on the Cross, I died with Him. He not only died in my stead, but he bore me with Him to the Cross, so that when He died I also died. And if I believe in the death of the Lord Jesus, then I can believe in my own death just as surely as I believe in His.* <sup>5</sup>

A traditional spiritual, titled, *Were You There?* asks:

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?...  
Sometimes it causes me to tremble...  
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?...  
Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?...  
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?...  
Were you there when He rose up from the dead?...  
Sometimes I feel like shouting glory!"

In light of our spiritual union with Christ, by faith we can answer yes!! We were there—spiritually crucified with Christ. We tremble with awe at the significance of this liberating fact. It should make us shout, “glory”!

**WE WERE THERE WHEN THEY  
CRUCIFIED OUR LORD**

Saved or lost  
We're at the Cross —  
In Him victorious  
Or suffering loss.  
We're there by faith  
In Him crucified,  
Or in Adam's life  
Piercing Jesus' side.

The choice is ours  
As Adam's kin —  
Receive the Savior  
Or die in our sin.  
Our debt He paid —  
From the Cross forgave;  
We receive His life  
Or remain sin's slave.

Charles R. Solomon

**DIMENSION 3:  
THE CROSS OF CHRIST  
IS OUR MEANS OF DISCIPLESHIP**

We come to the third dimension of the cross of Christ and its implications for the believer. Christ's redemptive work on Calvary is not only our means of pardon, and our means of renewal; it is also our *means of discipleship*. Let's compare this to the depth of the cross symbol.

Having come to know that our old man was crucified with Christ, and that we are set free from the authority of sin, and *reckoning* this spiritual fact

as personally true, we have the moral freedom to walk *in newness of life* (Rom. 6:6,11-14).

However, some who have considered these truths may be still missing the experiential blessings of abundant life in Christ (John 10:10). They may have come to learn about the believer's new identity in Christ and the doctrine of spiritual union with Him, yet the experience of love, joy, peace, holiness, and strength is still illusive. What else is involved in appropriating Christ as our Life? (Col. 3:4).<sup>1</sup>

To appreciate Christ's call to *take up our cross daily*, we need to understand the essential meaning of the Cross in discipleship. To discover this, we go back to the Garden of Gethsemane where Christ poured out His heart in prayer:

*Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done* (Luke 22:41-42).

Because of the joyful prospect of our salvation, the next day Christ drank that cup of suffering (Heb. 12:2). We find in our Lord's petition a concise statement of the essence of the Cross: *not my will, but Yours be done*.

How does this commitment relate to the practical experience of the Christ-life? The spirit of the believer is the *new man*, and Christ's life—like the Vine—is available for supernatural living (Col. 3:10; John 15:5). This results from the work of the Cross. Then what's the hold up? The *self-life*! And what is the self-life? The self-life is the

*independent* use of our mind, will, emotions, and affections (the faculties of the soul). James 1:21 exhorts us to

*receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

The soul is delivered from the self-life as we apply the way of the Cross. <sup>1</sup>

Dr. R. A. Torrey understood the way of surrender and faith. This well known Bible school dean walked into a meeting where Dr. A. B. Simpson was preaching. Simpson, occupied with the preaching of his sermon noticed Torrey, but forgot to introduce him at the end of the meeting and ask him to lead in prayer. Later, he wired Dr. Torrey with his apologies for the oversight. Torrey wired him back with the reply, “Dead—didn’t even notice it”.

Let’s consider how this application of the Cross works out practically. The following brief prayers can guide us.

1. The way of the Cross applies to the *mind* when we pray, not *my perspective*, but may *God’s perspective* determine my thoughts. We tend to walk by sight, not by faith, yet the path of discipleship requires just the opposite—we walk by faith, not by sight! (2 Cor. 5:7; Cf. Heb. 11:6). We need revelation, illumination, and a personal reckoning of the our identification with Christ.

Consider some basic questions that clarify God’s perspective: What is your natural perspec-

tive concerning *God's attributes*? Do you perceive Him as harsh and aloof? Instead, believe what Christ reveals about God's character—God is love! God is faithful! What is your natural perspective concerning *your identity*? Do you see yourself only as a sinner, struggling to find acceptance with God? Instead, believe what the Scripture teaches about your *new* identity in Christ and live in light of it!

What is your natural perspective concerning *your relationship with Christ*? Do you see yourself as separate from Him, just trying to serve Him? Instead, realize that you are one with Him!

*But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17).*

He is the Vine, you are branch!

What is your natural perspective concerning your *fellow believers*? Do you see them 'according to the flesh'? determining their value by their performance or status? Instead, see them 'in Christ'—fellow members of Christ's Body (2 Cor. 5:16).

There is a parallel between our salvation from the *penalty of sin* and our deliverance from the daily *power of sin*. Both aspects of deliverance are by *grace through faith*.

*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him (Col. 2:6).*

Instead of holding onto your carnal perspective, accept God's true perspective by faith.

2. The way of the cross applies to the will when we pray, Not *my will*, but *Your will* be done. This supernatural is none other than the life of Christ (Cf. 1 John 5:11,12). And what was Christ's attitude toward the Father's will? In a messianic prophecy we hear Him say,

*...Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart (Ps. 40:7,8).*

Christ testified during His earthly ministry,

*...The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him (John 8:29).*

Therefore, what should our response be to God? Whenever our will is contrary to God's will, the Cross is applied as we surrender to God's good, acceptable, and perfect will (Rom. 12:2).

3. The way of the Cross applies to the emotions when we pray, Not *my resources*, but may *Your resources* be my source of living. This wonderful theme appears repeatedly in 2 Corinthians:

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (4:7; Cf.3:4,5; 12:9).*

When you rely on your own resources, you will feel worried, guilty, and frustrated. Instead, respond to Isaiah's invitation:

*But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint (Is. 40:31).*

4. The way of the Cross applies to the affections when we pray, not *my values*, but may *God's values* motivate me. Here some Christians miss the blessings of the abiding life. If they seek this victorious life only for their own enjoyment, they grieve the Holy Spirit. Divine love must flow through us to others. We are called to accept the values of God's Kingdom (of which all true Christians are citizens—Col. 1:13).

*...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, ...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matt. 6:20,21).*

Our possessions become idols if we live for them and depend on them instead of God (Col. 3:5). Instead, we

should seek the greatest value of all—the glory of God!

*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 4:11; Cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-18).*

International teacher on the overcoming life, Jessie Penn-Lewis, reluctantly faced this dimension of the Cross as she read a book on this topic:

*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 glorious experience.' But the next day I picked it up again, and the Lord whispered so gently, 'If you want deeper 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 again I 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 of 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 have agreed to’, and on 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 yourself out to others and want nothing for yourself—to leave yourself utterly in the hands of God and not care what happens to you. (Cf. 2 Cor. 4:10,11).*

This is where *brokenness* relates to discipleship. Brokenness is God’s providential pressure on His children that leads them to abandon independent living. His purpose is to displace the self-life in believers. As fragrance filled the house when Mary broke her flask of costly perfume to anoint Jesus, so the fragrance of Christ’s life will be increasingly evident through you as you yield and trust Christ as your Lord and Life.

## THE BACKWARD LOOK

As I mount to view the Cross  
From the vantage point of time,  
My heart is overwhelmed  
By love and grace sublime.

Sin is ever placed on Him (1 Pet. 2:24)  
Who died that I might live; (Rom. 5:10)  
Even in His dying throes  
He prayed, "Father, forgive". (Luke 23:24)

The wonder of forgiveness  
Is a blessing all its own, (Ps. 32:1)  
To know that all my guilt  
Has taken wings and flown. (Is. 6:7)

And, then, to look to Heaven  
And the bliss I long to know,  
It all seems so unreal  
As I struggle here below.

Tho' my heart would do His will (Rom. 7:22)  
With my body His abode, (1 Cor. 3:16)  
The flesh resists His call (Rom. 7:24)  
To the high and holy road.

As the turmoil takes its toll,  
And I cry, "Oh, wretched man", (Rom. 7:24)  
I take a backward look (Heb. 12:2)  
And see redemption's plan.

I had seen the Cross as His,  
As the substitute for sin; (Rom. 5:8)  
But this was not enough  
To quell the storm within. (Rom. 7:15)

Now, the picture comes to me —  
The Spirit's revelation; (Eph. 1:17)  
I, too, have been crucified; (Gal. 2:20)  
There is no condemnation! (Rom. 8:1)

The joy of being dead to sin  
And the law which long oppressed,  
(Rom. 8:2)  
Is now my daily portion: (Luke 9:23)  
I have entered into rest. (Heb. 4:10)

Charles R. Solomon

Oswald Chambers has observed  
that,

*All heaven is interested in the  
cross of Christ, all hell is terri-  
bly afraid of it, while men are  
the only beings who more or  
less ignore its meaning".*

Instead of ignoring its meaning, let's  
continue to explore the profound im-  
plications of the Cross.

When the Lord Jesus resolutely  
set His face to go to Jerusalem for that  
final Passover, it seemed unbelievable  
to His disciples (Luke 9:51; Matt. 16:22).  
For the Messiah to be brutally execut-  
ed on the dreaded cross—Rome's cruel  
instrument of capitol punishment—  
seemed too tragic an end for the Lord.  
Even in Gethsemane, the shadow of  
the Cross weighed so heavily on Je-  
sus that He sweat, as it were, drops of  
blood. Yet, the Father planned to give  
victory, not apart from the Cross, but  
*through* it. The Son offered Himself  
there for the ransom required for our  
redemption. Christ's resurrection was  
the unmistakable sign that Jesus is tru-  
ly Lord! (Rom. 1:4). He is Victor!

#### **DIMENSION 4: THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS OUR MEANS OF VICTORY**

This brings us to the fourth dimension of the Cross. Here we see it as *our means of victory*. In keeping with the illustration of the cross monument, this dimension can be symbolized by this cross's *radiance*. Each night the electric lights on the 30' structure in Stoney Creek, Ontario are turned on. The illumined cross shines brightly for all to see. And so should we behold the glory of Christ's triumphant sacrifice.

Now consider, *how* is the Cross our means of victory? Note first that the cross is not intended as an authorization of political or military victory. This error occurred in church history. For the first three centuries A.D., the church suffered greatly under waves of Roman persecution. Then Constantine the Great, Caesar of the western Roman Empire, was challenged by Maxentius—a self-appointed Caesar who controlled Italy and Africa. After five years of civil war, Constantine marched on Rome in A. D. 312 to confront his rival. A history text records,

*Alarmed by reports of Maxentius' mastery of magical arts, [Constantine] prayed to the 'Supreme God' for help. The response was a sign, a cross in the noonday sky 'above the sun', and with it the words, 'Conquer by this'. That night, Christ appeared to him in a*

*dream and commanded him to use this sign...’ as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies’. Constantine obeyed, marched on Rome, confronted Maxentius, who was miraculously induced to fight outside the city fortifications, and conquered.”<sup>1</sup>*

The emperor later professed faith in Christianity and ended the persecution of Christians. For better or for worse, Rome eventually decreed Christianity the official religion of the empire. This view of the cross as a military emblem was mixed with the emperor’s pagan beliefs—beliefs that were later swept into the church.

If the victory of the cross is not a military or political victory, what is its nature? The real character of Christ’s victory on the Cross is *spiritual*—it equips us for victorious living! The believer’s spiritual enemies have been identified as *the world, the flesh, and the devil*. Scripture declares each opponent to be defeated by Christ’s atonement on the Cross!

**1. Through the Cross, we have victory over the world.**

Paul testified,

*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal. 6:14).*

The world here is *kosmos*. In an ethical context it refers to human society arranged in hostility to God's Kingdom. This is what the apostle John warned us against:

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).*

Paul testified that the world was crucified to him since he was placed into Christ. In other words, society's fascination with fame and power had no claim on him. He was also, *crucified to the world*. Paul's life was not to be spent in furthering a secular agenda. As one who had picked up his cross to follow Christ, he had one consuming passion:

*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24; Cf. Phil. 1:20-24; Matt. 6:33).*

Reader, have you so identified with Christ's victory on the Cross that you are living as a faithful citizen of His Kingdom? Don't forfeit this opportunity to walk in victory as one of Paul's co-workers did:

*for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world... (2 Tim. 4:10).*

Since the world has no right to make us commit spiritual treason, how can we appropriate Christ's victory day by day? *The key is faith:*

*In fact, this faith of ours is the only way in which the world can be conquered. For who could ever be said to conquer the world but the man who really believes that Jesus is God's Son? (1 John 5:4,5—Phillips).*

## **2. Through the Cross, we have victory over the flesh.**

*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24).*

This is not to be confused with our spiritual co-crucifixion with Christ [*Dimension 2*]. The concept of *flesh* here refers to *the residue of the old man* that contains selfish beliefs, feelings, responses, and values learned independently of God. It is sin stained and sin trained. The flesh is *in us* but it is *not us*. Paul declared,

*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells... (Rom. 7:18).*

This tendency opposes our new nature and the indwelling Holy Spirit:

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish (Gal. 5:17).*

Now if this conflict still persists in us, in what way have we *crucified the flesh*? The flesh was crucified in the sense that *its authority over us has been broken!*—that the body of sin might be rendered powerless [as a tool of sin] (Rom. 6:6, NIV footnote).

We must implement this necessary strategy to have victory over the flesh:

*put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts (Rom. 13:14).*

### **3. Through the Cross, we have victory over the devil.**

Col. 2:13-15 gives a powerful declaration of this victory: Christ

*wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [the Cross] (Cf. Eph. 1:20-21).*

Because of His victory, we can have confidence in overcoming the devil. James instructed us,

*Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).*

Satan must flee because he is a defeated foe. Revelation describes his destiny:

*The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:10).*

Satan will not rule over hell; he will be the most severely punished there.

In the meantime, put on your spiritual armor,

*that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:11,12; Cf. 1 Pet. 5:8,9).*

With this confidence join the victorious procession:

*Thanks be to God who leads us, wherever we are, on Christ's triumphant way and makes our knowledge of him spread*

*throughout the world like a lovely perfume! (2 Cor. 2:14, Phillips).*

F.J. Huegel urged,

*Let us arise, for the victory is ours. Our right to a full-orbed victory is as unalienable as our claims to the air we breathe... Innumerable multitudes of Christians, in spite of their faith, are still groaning under the oppression of the enemy. They are being robbed of incalculable wealth...Now they may—they should be—set free. They need but say 'amen' to all that the Cross of Christ is in the economy of God...they must accept what God offers them in their Crucified-Resurrected Redeemer; namely a crucified life over which Satan has no power. 'The prince of this world comes', they, too, may say, 'but he finds nothing in me, for I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me'.<sup>2</sup>*

Fellow believer, in light of the dimensions of Christ's sacrificial work, lift high the banner of the Cross!

## VICTORY IN THE VICTOR

Sin was our master —  
We, its willing slave; (Rom. 6:20)  
The 'old man' triumphant  
'Twixt birth and the grave.  
Its deathknell sounded  
As the veil was rent; (Matt. 27:51)  
Christ died on the cross, (Rom. 5:8)  
And sin's fury was spent.

When He rose from the dead  
Victorious o'er sin,  
He offered new life (John 5:24)  
To those of our kin.  
He ascended to Heaven (Acts 1:9)  
To the Father's right hand; (Heb. 12:2)  
There to seat us in glory, (Eph. 2:6)  
Sin's presence to remand.

In Christ we died to sin; (Rom. 6:11)  
But sin—it did not die,  
And through our personalities  
For control it still does vie.  
When by permission or deceit  
Our wills it does enmesh, (Rom. 6:13a)  
We have given reign  
To an enemy called Flesh.

The 'old man' died with Christ, (Rom. 6:6)  
But flesh (self) is with us still; (Gal. 5:17)  
We acceded to sin's behest  
In the domain of our will. (Rom. 6:12)  
The flesh, too, is crucified —  
Its affections and its lusts; (Gal. 5:24)  
To bring its deeds to death, (Rom. 8:13)  
The Cross again we trust! (2 Cor. 4:11)

Our Head's in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6)  
And our feet on the Earth;  
Our minds are renewed (Rom. 12:2)  
To know our true worth. (Eph. 1:6)

The Four Dimensions of the Cross

Our talk is affected  
By Christ our true Head; (Eph. 5:23b)  
Our walk is affected (Gal. 5:25)  
As by Him we are led. (Rom. 8:14)

Constant victory is promised (2 Cor. 2:14)  
As in Christ we are placed; (1 Cor. 1:30)  
It becomes our portion  
As Self (flesh) is effaced.  
As He lives His life (Gal, 2:20b)  
Which only is meet,  
His joy in us—our joy is full; (John 15:11)  
In Him we are complete! (Col. 2:9,10)

Then, your life is hidden in God; (Col. 3:3)  
And all spiritual blessing you gain;  
(Eph. 1:3)  
Things of this world lose their pull,  
And only things eternal remain (Heb. 12:27)  
Together we look for the blessed hope—  
(Titus 2:12,13)  
And eagerly await that loud cry;  
(1 Thes. 4:16)  
His coming back will be as He went,  
(Acts 1:11)  
And we will meet Him in the sky!  
(1 Thes. 4:17)

Charles R. Solomon

## FOOTNOTES

### Dimension 1:

- <sup>1</sup> F. J. Huegel, *The Cross through the Scriptures*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1970), 62.
- <sup>2</sup> Henry Blackaby and Claude King, *Experiencing God* workbook, (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Press, 1990), 42. Blackaby adds, "Carrie is now doing very well and has finished her university degree. April 1992."

### Dimension 2:

- <sup>1</sup> Jessie Penn-Lewis, *The Cross of Calvary*, (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade), p. 26-27.
- <sup>2</sup> Evan H. Hopkins, *The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life*, (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1991), p. 109-110.
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. David C. Needham, *Alive for the First Time*, (Multnomah, 1995), p.120-123, discussing 'essential selfhood' (which I identify as the human spirit) in 1 John 3:9.
- <sup>4</sup> Definitions:

**Old Man:** Specific—Old man refers to unregenerate human spirit consisting of Adamic life prior to salvation. New man refers to regenerate human spirit, indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

**Old Man:** Generally—Old man is all that the Christian was before salvation. New man is all that the Christian is after salvation.

**Flesh (Self-Life):** Flesh is the interface of the mortal body and human soul that consists of the beliefs, values, identity messages, coping mechanisms etc. acquired through living independently of God. It is sin-stained (by depravity from Adam) and sin-trained (from each person's life experiences and choices—Romans 7:18). See [www.Grace-Note-book.com](http://www.Grace-Note-book.com) 'Definitions'

- <sup>5</sup> Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, (London: Victory Press, 1963), p.35

### Dimension 3:

- <sup>1</sup> As we read the New Testament, it can be difficult to sort out the many aspects of the Cross in the life of the believer. For example, Paul wrote in the past tense, *I have been crucified with Christ*, and *you have put off the old man* [Dimension 2]. However, there are a variety of references to a present tense kind of *cross* experience: *I die daily, being conformable to His death*. Christ proclaimed: *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me* (Luke 9:23) [Dimension 3].

- <sup>2</sup> From *Memoirs of Jessie Penn-Lewis*, by M.N. Garrand; quoted in *Ultimate Intention*, by De Vern Fromke.

Dimension 4:

- <sup>1</sup> Richard A. Todd, *Constantine and the Christian Empire in Eerdmans Handbook to the History of the Christian Church*, ed., Tim Dowley, (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 130.
- <sup>2</sup> F. J. Huegel, *The Cross of Christ—The Throne of God*, (Bethany Fellowship, 1935), 94-95 (Cf. John 14:30; Galatians 2:20).

## NOTES

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## **NOTES**

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*Conquering PTSD*  
*For Me To Live Is Christ*  
*Wheel & Line Tract*  
*Romans Road Tract*  
*Wisdom of (Charles R.) Solomon*  
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