

Living the Way of the World or the Way of the Cross

Today let us have a closer look at our understanding of the Father's eternal and ultimate intention for Himself and all of His creation, and the philosophy or principle by which it all functions.

The Father, God, governs and works everything according to the **eternal Cross principle**. Now what do we understand by that statement? Well, the answer is threefold: the Cross as a **principle** is an expression of the divine way of life – the life of *selfless giving*; the Cross as a **place** is where the divine and worldly ways of life come into conflict – where the *work of the Cross* realigns us with the heavenly life; the Cross as a **power** is the means by which God works through believers to realise His ultimate purpose – as we live according to the *way of the Cross*.

From eternity past, before the fall of man, God ordained that we should live by the **principle of the Cross**. That always has been, and always will be His plan for us. But man fell into sin, was separated from relationship and fellowship with God which necessitated the Cross of Calvary and the redeeming **work of the Cross** to reinstate our relationship and fellowship with the Father. Having completed this **work of the Cross**, He has now put us back on the path where the **Cross as a way** is the principle or philosophy by which His power is realised in our lives as we live unto Him and for His glory.

But first, some observations and questions.

If we closely examine the philosophical appeal of a lot of the current evangelistic effort, and ongoing modus operandi of the church at large, we see it more closely follows the **way or philosophy of the world**, which is essentially quite selfish. This philosophy is essentially one of a **hope of gain** and a **fear of loss** to the individual. It's what I call a "come and get gospel." Come to Jesus and get saved, get healed, get delivered, get an abundant life, get all your troubles solved, get the victory and live on happily forever. But this gospel or philosophy stops there and essentially contains little or no call to the selfless life of being expended for Christ and others. There's apparently little appetite or encouragement to live in accordance with the Cross principle or the **way of the Cross**. As a result, it's become very difficult for our generation to understand or comprehend the real meaning of sacrifice, or a "poured-out" life. The altar Paul talks about, where we are called to come, suffer and die, has been replaced with an invitation to an altar where we come to get over any suffering or hardship we face. The modern appeal and way of life is essentially to get, not to give. Its focus is on me and my wellbeing. It's selfish and self-centred. It's diametrically opposed to the Way or principle of the Cross.

So, as a result, we see a lot of religious activity going on, but little real spiritual growth.

Where has this all gone wrong? How did we get to embrace this philosophy that is far from what is in the Father's heart?

The answer lies in our point of reference. When self is the point of reference of all things we stray from what God has planned and desired for Himself and His eternal plan. God, and God alone, must be our point of reference in all things. We must align with Him and His eternal purpose and plan. The work of the cross is to bring us back to Him so we can live for Him and His purposes, His way.

So let us consider the Father's ultimate plan and intention in the Cross. So long as we present or interpret the Cross as it purely benefits us, working for *our security, safety and victory*, we will miss

what the Father planned for Himself from His eternal viewpoint and philosophy, and in doing so we will miss our part in His plan.

We must come to see and embrace the **Cross as an eternal principle** emanating from the heart of God and what it realises for Him. An eternal principle that was in His heart from way before the foundation of the earth. For, *“From Him and through Him and to Him are all things”* (Rom 11:36). It’s all about Him, and when we fall in line with His ways we will be secure, safe and have the victory, but His plan and purpose will prevail and He will be glorified in our lives.

The **work of the Cross** is to put to death the old sinful selfish nature and exchange it for the new divine nature, so that you can be back on track to live by the **way of the Cross**, the eternal Cross principle or philosophy by which we live unto the Father and His purpose.

When the **work of the Cross** is not simply and only an outward thing which has taken place to bring us to salvation (and all which that entails), but when it has become an **operative principle** within us, then we are on our way to realising the Father’s ultimate intention and plan in the Cross. We come to walking according to the **way of the Cross**.

Listen to Paul as he shows what the **way of the Cross** is, which led to his fruitful and successful ministry:

2 Cor 4:11 ... *“For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you.”*

In a similar manner we are encouraged to move from always seeking to **get** to seeing what **God might receive** through our lives. The focus is on God and His plan and purpose. It’s all about God. Look at the *“for Thy sake ...”* statements:

Rom 8:26 ... *Just as it is written, “**For Your sake** we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

2 Cor 4:11 ... *“For we who live (the ‘new creatures’ who have received the life of Christ through the work of the Cross) are constantly being delivered over to death **for Jesus’ sake**, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”*

* Parentheses added by author for emphasis

So we have this amazing privilege and calling to be transparent vessels constantly revealing to others the dying of the Lord Jesus. Through this selfless living the **power of the Cross** is released in the lives of others to bring them to salvation.

Now many shudder at this philosophy of being called to a continual ‘*working of death*’, and may say, *“Isn’t the ‘abundant life’ Jesus promised one where I am comfortable and happy and all my troubles taken away, not a life of ‘being put to death all day long’.* I don’t want to suffer and have hassles. I just want a comfortable life” But the reality is, a life that does not embrace the **way of the Cross** will be empty. It will be without power. You see, the Christ-life can only be lived in one way – unto God and poured out for others. That alone is the life of true fulfilment and joy for each and every one of us.

Christ, who has come to take up residence in you through the *work of the Cross*, is continuing to be what He has been from eternity past, the Lamb slain, the one who gives His life that others may have life, and the servant of all. He lives in you by the eternal Cross principle, the *way of the Cross*.

God is waiting to turn our captivity to a selfish world system of *security* and *reward*, to a life on His highway, *way of the Cross*, where life is lived unto Him and empowered by Him.

The *work of the Cross* is for once and for all finished. Christ's death on the Cross for us and our death with Him is a **past tense** reality.

Gal 2:20 ... "I have been crucified with Christ ..."

Rom 6:6 ... "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with ..."

Rom 6:11 ... "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

We were delivered from the guilt of sin and its power through our identification with the **finished work** of Christ on the Cross. This work Christ did on our behalf to redeem us from sin and to give us His life to live by. This work of the Cross is **final** – it's **finished**.

Why am I emphasising this **finished** work of the Cross? Because we must not confuse this completed work of the Cross for us with what Pauls calls our 'dying daily'. Our 'dying daily' is not a dying to sin. We are dead to sin. We have been made righteous. From the moment we acknowledged Christ's redemptive work for us and were made 'new creatures', we have been dead to sin. The work of the Cross is a past tense reality – it is finished.

When Paul talks about 'dying daily' he is referring to the *way of the Cross* – a **present and ongoing** principle and reality which we share with Christ (who is our life).

Jesus, who the Bible calls the Last Adam, came to Earth as a sinless man needing only to embrace the *way of the Cross*. He came to show us how the righteous are to live by the *way of the Cross*.

Heb 5:8 ... "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered."

Luke 9:23 ... "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

This has no reference to the putting away of sin. Some misinterpret this thinking it was a call to put the old self to death through self-discipline. No, that's wrong. To think that is to frustrate the grace of God!

We must keep these two aspects of the Cross in their proper place. Through the *work of the Cross* Jesus, the last Adam, took our sinful selves into Himself and we with Him died and were buried. Finished. Dead and buried, the end of the old Adam race. When Jesus rose from the dead we rose with Him as 'new creatures' – a brand new race.

2 Cor 5:21 ... "He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

2 Cor 5:17 ... *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."*

The *old man in Adam* experiences the **work of the Cross**, while the *new man in Christ* is called to embrace the **way of the Cross**. So as new creatures in Christ we daily live by the divine way of life, the **way of the Cross**, which works death in us but life in others. We live the John 12:24 productive life.

John 12:24 ... *"unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*

So the 'daily dying' Paul speaks of, or the 'dying seed' Jesus spoke of have no reference to purification from sin. A farmer only plants **good** seed, seed with life in it to reproduce itself. Seed is not planted for **purification** it's planted for **production**. We, the new creatures in Christ are seed in the Father's hand to be sown with a view for production.

If we're still not clear on this matter, let's look at a couple of scriptures to further clarify the paradox of 'dead' – but also 'dying.'

Phil 3:10 ... *"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, **being conformed to His death.**"*

Gal 2:20 ... *"**I have been crucified with Christ**; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

Paul had written to the Galatians approximately 6 years before he wrote to the Philippians. Why should Paul who has testified that he has been crucified and died with Christ years later say that he desired to share in the sufferings and be conformed to Christ's death. If you're dead you're dead, aren't you? So how could Paul long to die again or to continue to die? Well it's very simple. Paul was no longer speaking of the death or dying of the 'old man' – he was referring to and speaking as the 'new man' in Christ.

He spoke in a similar way to the Colossians:

Col 1:24 ... *"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and **in my flesh** I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."*

As Paul shared more deeply in Christ's sufferings by conforming to the **way of the Cross**, he experienced greater **resurrection power** – his ministry in Christ to others bore more fruit. His desire was that others may come to a knowledge of Christ and walk in the new life, and this was the only effective way to see that happen. He wanted resurrection power to be operative in his ministry to others. Just listen as he speaks to the Corinthians:

2 Cor 1:8-9 ... *"For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves **so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.**"*

Many want power, miracles, and signs and wonders in their life and ministry, but the only way to see this is through conformity to death. Jesus is calling out to you, *"Take up your cross and follow Me."* Weakness in us that the life and strength of Christ may be displayed, is the **way of the Cross**.

Many quote Acts 1:8 and pray for the Holy Spirit hoping to get power, thinking this is like a magic wand they can have to do miraculous things for God, without having to live a selfless life. But that's not what Acts 1:8 really offers. So what does it offer?

Acts 1:8 ... *"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses (Greek: martyrs) both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

Our English word 'witnesses' has been translated from the Greek word μάρτυρες. It is the same word from which we get our English word 'martyr'. We are filled with the Holy Spirit to be empowered to lay down our lives for Christ's sake so that resurrection power can work in the lives of those to whom we minister.

Jesse Penn-Lewis once said, *"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 it utterly in the hands of God and nor care what happens to you."*

Let me wrap this all up by using some simple illustrations: Think of:

Hammer and nail: The hammer hits the nail. The nail may see the hammer as brutal and merciless. But both hammer and nail are servants of the master builder. When the nail surrenders to the will of the workman it gets a glimpse of his plans for its future, to hold the structure together, and then willingly yields to the hammer blows without complaining.

File and metal: The file bites into and eats away at the piece of metal. Yet the file has no will of its own or desire to hurt the metal. Both the file and the metal serve the master workman. He alone determines how much metal is to be filed away. He is making something useful out of the metal piece. And the piece of metal is only useful in its final filed state.

Furnace and ore: It is the master workman who controls, first the crushing of the ore and then, the heat and time of smelting in the furnace. Through this process he is turning the ore into useful metal, which will be used to make cars, structural steel, fridges, stoves, and so on. Things we so depend upon.

It is God who uses the 'file', 'hammer' and 'furnace' – the 'dying daily' to prepare and use us for His eternal purpose and intention. There is no other way we are to live than the **way of the Cross**.

Let me wrap up by saying, Christ came to put to death, for once and for all, our sinful old man and in exchange made us brand new creatures, containers of His very own life to live by, not simply that we should live in safety, security and victory embracing a philosophy of hope of gain and fear of loss, but that we could be expended for Him by conforming to His death so that His life in us could be poured out for others.

If we want to see His resurrection power at work, if we want to see a mighty ingathering of the harvest for Christ, if we want to obey Christ's command to, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."*, and if we want to live lives that have purpose and are productive, fulfilling and truly joyful, there is

only one way, it's the way the Father planned from way before the foundation of the world, it's the ***way of the Cross***. Let's be expended for His sake! Let's live for Him, His way, for His glory and honour!

Amen!