

The only way into union with Christ.

Watchman Nee:

"Do we leave the Cross to go on to union with the risen Christ?" is the question that many of God's people are asking; and when one tells them of the need of a continual application of the death of Christ to the life, they say, "But I am in the risen Christ, and it is a living Christ we need, not a dead Christ." Much of this misunderstanding is due to dealing with this blessed truth in the letter rather than in the spirit; "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6).

The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of Calvary. Christ's death on the Cross was the highest expression of the life of Christ, and as you partake of His life, the spirit of Christ's crucifixion becomes the principle of your life.

Paul had not gone beyond the Cross when he sought for a deeper union with the risen Lord, but he saw that the deeper the union with the living Christ the deeper must he sink into His death (see Phil. iii. 10).

To be risen with Christ and to abide in Him by a living faith means that you share the death of Christ.

The condition for a triumphant Christian life is UNION WITH CHRIST.

The only way of overcoming sin is by a life of union with Jesus Christ.

Our blessed Lord teaches us this very clearly in John xv. He says, "Without ME ye can do nothing," and one of the early lessons of the believer is that he is absolutely dependent upon his Lord for everything. He learns the helplessness of being without Christ.

The message of Christ to the sinner is "Come unto Me"; His message to the believer is "Abide in Me."

"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. vi. 17). But how does that joining take place?

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ implies a belief into Christ. The faith moves Christward and finds its anchorage in Christ Himself, and thus the believer is brought into vital contact with HIM.

Let us go to God's Word in the third chapter of John's Gospel. Here we get clearly the Lord's teaching of regeneration or the new birth.

First we are told our need of it (see verse 3); then we are told its nature—that it is a spiritual nature or birth (see verses 5 and 6); but in verses 14 and 15 we see the way into it—by believing in Christ; that word "in" should be translated "into." See verse 14—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

Calvary was necessary before the sinner could believe in Christ; the crucified Saviour draws all men unto Him. See John xii. 32, 33—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die."

Satan's desire is to get the believer away from the Cross, and he is often most successful when he offers an inducement to seek a life of union with the Risen Lord. But the devil knows that there is no real union apart and away from the Cross, and so he gives a counterfeit experience instead.

Paul teaches us clearly in Romans vi. that to be joined to the Risen Christ and to abide in Him by a living faith means that we must share His death. "Know ye not that so many of us [as, sic] were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (Rom. vi. 3).

He also teaches us that a deeper union with Christ is only possible as we have an ever deeper acquaintance of the Cross. See Philippians iii. 10—"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." This is what we need to know, not in theory or sentiment, but in actual experience, and the result will be a life of power, of victory over sin, Satan, sickness and death, and the world, and this is only possible as we get back to the Cross.

To say that there is no need for a continual application of the blood of Christ to the life shows a superficial knowledge of the meaning of His death. It is blessedly true that the blood that has been shed on the Cross avails for all time for our complete atonement, but that does not exhaust the work of Christ's death. There is the

need of continual cleansing from sin.

A saint of God once asked me a very startling question—"When did you have a bout of confession of sin last?" I was arrested by the question and could not answer. I therefore went to God about it, and discovered that I had been making the common mistake of relying upon the blood to automatically cleanse my sin; also I had lost sight of my sinnership. May I apply that question to you? When did you have a bout of confession last? "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9).

One of the things which hinders God from working in us is the activity of the evil natural life, which is continually getting us out of the Spirit and accounts for the failure to walk in the Spirit. Our spirits are being continually affected by this evil influence, and try as we may we cannot control our spirits and walk in the calm of God. This uncrucified evil nature is also the material which Satan and his evil spirits play upon and are able to fan into a flame, and is therefore the cause of much of the conflict which we have with the powers of darkness, and is "ground" for their continual attacks.

We may have learned how to overcome them by the application of the blood, but they will return again and again to the conflict as long as there is "ground."

The Cross is the REMEDY. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24). But how? by an absolute surrender of the evil natural life to the death of Christ, and by a perpetual attitude of abiding in Christ, and thus sharing the benefits of His death, the result being liberation from the power of sin and evil nature in order that we may walk in newness of life.

In Romans viii. we have one of the clearest descriptions of the life in the Spirit in the whole Bible; but we observe that on the very threshold of the chapter we have these words—"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." There is no possibility of entering into the spiritual life except through union with Christ—that union is one of death and life. Any attempt to obtain spiritual life apart from the Cross ends in failure or in counterfeit.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Cross; the Cross is the highest expression of the Spirit; it was "through the Eternal Spirit" Christ offered Himself to God (see Heb. ix. 14).