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How to Enter into This Life That Wins

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God. (Gal. 2.20)

Having seen the kind of life ordained by God as well as the life we actually live, the way of victory according to God as well as the way according to man, together with the genuineness and nature of the life that wins, we will now learn how we enter into this victorious life. And a most important question naturally arises here: how can we obtain Christ as Victory?

The verse just quoted above shows us how to enter in. Let us first discuss the words, "it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me"; because such is the life we ought to enter into. Negatively, we may say "it is no longer I that live." Positively, we may say that "Christ liveth in me." In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he testified that he had already arrived at this place, he had already possessed this experience, and he had already entered in. Let us observe how he arrived, possessed and entered. For the way Paul entered in is the way we also will enter in. The way he entered in is revealed by the clause preceding and the clause succeeding the words, "it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." The first condition to entering in is spelled out by these words: "I have been crucified with Christ"; and the second condition to entering in is found as follows: "and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God." By fulfilling these two conditions in his life Paul obtained Christ as his victory— as his righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Let us take a closer look at these two conditions.

A. Yielding— 'I have been crucified with Christ'

The first condition is, "I have been crucified with Christ." Now what does this mean? Why must I be crucified with Christ before I can obtain this life that wins? Here I would ask this question: How many persons today live in us as Christians? We confess that as soon as we believe in the Lord Jesus, He comes to live in us. "Know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate" (2 Cor. 13.5). As those who have believed, we know we are not reprobates; therefore, the Lord living in us is a sure fact. However, it is tragically true that although Christ lives in us, we ourselves live in us too. In order to have Christ as our life that wins, we ourselves must move out and let go. And with ourselves moving out, we may obtain this victorious life.

Yesterday a sister asked me how she could possess this life that wins. My answer to her was quite simple: "Just move yourself away." Suppose there are two families living under one roof, and a problem arises between the two. The situation would doubtless change were the difficult family to move away. The issue today is not whether you have Christ in you, since the moment you believed, Christ indeed came to live in you. No, the issue is that you must move away. As soon as you, the sinful, move away from living together with Him who is sinless, everything will be fine. Hence, the first condition is that you must move out.

"I have been crucified with Christ." Thus declares the word of God. But what do we say about this word? Do we not say that many times we try to move out without success? We pretend to die, yet we do not die. We frequently attempt suicide, yet we still live. Too often we appear dead, yet we are not dead. We attempt to crucify ourselves, but we fail to die. What, then, is the trouble? Let us inquire into this matter more thoroughly.

(1) I Cannot

I assume we have all seen the fact of the cross. We know that when the Lord was crucified for us, He not only bore our sins but also took us with Him to the cross. We have known the teaching of Romans 6 for many years. Our old man was crucified with Him, just as our sins were borne by Him on the cross. Hence we have the knowledge that we were crucified with Christ as well as that the sin problem was solved. This is what we have emphasized throughout these years. No doubt I was crucified with Christ, but why do I not experience the effect of this co-crucifixion? The Lord has taken me to the cross, yet I remain the same. I am still bound, weak, defeated and without strength. The Scripture says, "I have been crucified with Christ." Why then am I yet powerless? Many saved Christians are working hard for this, with the vain hope of

victory someday. Nevertheless, victory is far away from them.

May I say that knowing the salvation the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us is one thing, but our accepting this salvation is quite another— just as preparing food is one thing, but eating the food is quite another. The apostle Paul shows us how to accept the Lord's death. Romans 6 discloses to us that every one of us has died. Romans 7, though, tells us why I as a Christian, having died, am still not dead. Why am I who died yet alive today? Romans 6 is the objective truth, whereas Romans 7 is the subjective experience. Romans 6 is fact, while Romans 7 is experience. Many Christians today know Romans 6 quite well. They understand they are no longer in bondage to sin, they have been discharged from the law, and they must reckon themselves as dead to sin daily. Though they understand, nothing seems to work.

The teaching and I are far apart. The teaching is, "I have been crucified with Christ;" even so, I say I am still alive. The teaching says I am no longer in bondage to sin; even so, I say sin is still with me. The teaching says I have been freed from the bondage of the law; even so, I say I am yet under law. What really is the explanation? We shall find it in Romans 7.

Romans 7 unveils a hidden flaw in us; which is to say, that we do not approve of what God has done and we do not accept His verdict. Why did God crucify us? When He crucified us with His Son, He was telling us we were absolutely useless and hopeless: that we were beyond repair or improvement: that apart from our being crucified, there is really neither a use nor hope. Therefore, the cross stands as an evaluation of us. The evaluation of the cross is that you and I are worthy of death. This is God's appraisal of you and me. If we truly accept the cross as our evaluation, then we know for certain we are totally useless and without any good. We too will say with God that we are worthy of death. God has already declared that except we die, you and I are utterly without hope. If we truly acknowledge this, can we possibly still think of doing any good works?

Recently the Chinese government proclaimed a new law against opium smoking. All who smoke opium after being reformed will be shot. Suppose the government catches a person who has smoked it after being reformed. What do you think that person will do? Will he ask a doctor to give him some injections so that he may quit smoking it before he dies? It would be meaningless if he should do so. Why? Because he is already a condemned prisoner. He will not think of doing the slightest good or of reforming. He will just wait for his death. Similarly speaking, God has said we are worthy to die; that we are beyond repair and reform. If, then, his verdict for us is death, why should we think of doing any good work to try to improve ourselves?

In spite of our admission that it was useless for us to repair or improve ourselves before we were saved, we nonetheless attempt to do these very same kinds of things after we were saved so that we might please God. How we resolved many times to be good! How we made many spiritual promises to God! We have told Him we would do whatever He wanted us to do. We promised Him we would rise up early in the morning. We promised to be zealous the next day. Many have broken our promises, yet how many have we actually fulfilled? One sister from the Western world told me that she had promised God concerning thirty different items in her life, but she was not able to fulfill even one. This only demonstrates the fact that we have not accepted God's evaluation of us, nor have we acknowledged His verdict about us. We have been destined to die, yet we have been busy thinking of getting a physician or changing to better dress or whatever.

Oh, let us realize that the cross expresses God's despair of men! It announces His hopelessness towards men! It is God's way of saying that He can neither repair nor improve us, He can only crucify us. What is surprising is, that though we have already known this fact of our utter corruption and, therefore, our crucifixion, we nevertheless continue to claim we are not so bad. Accordingly, we made resolutions today and will make even more resolutions tomorrow: O God, I will not lose my temper hereafter: O God, perhaps my last resolution was not firm enough: this time, O God, I will make it firmer. Thus do we make resolution after resolution. Such was the way, in fact, that Paul followed: "to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not" (Rom. 7.18b). Always resolve, yet always fail. Like Paul before us, for many of us today this is our common experience too. Have we not resolved and promised long enough? Let us heed once and for all what God says about us: He says we are worthy of death because we are useless and hopeless.

"I have been crucified with Christ" means that God was disappointed in me and also that I, like Paul, have despaired of myself too. God had seen me through and through. He knew that I had neither usefulness nor hope. So I too have reckoned myself as hopeless and confessed that I could never please God. There is nothing God can do but to put me to death. All who are in the flesh have absolutely no hope and are therefore worthy of death.

Recently I have been to see a number of families. In some, the husbands have been sick; in others, the wives have been sick; and in still others, the children have been sick. When these families begin to give up hope, they say to me, "If it b

the God's will let this one or that one be taken earlier." Why do they say this? Because there is no more hope. Being hopeless, it is better to die early. Has not God said to us that we were hopeless, and that therefore He could do nothing but have us crucified? Can we not also say to ourselves that since we are hopeless, it is better for us to be crucified?

Here is our problem: on the one hand, we are most familiar with the evaluation of Romans 6; on the other hand, we make the resolutions of Romans 7: we are still promising God, we still consider ourselves as possessing some good. However plain Romans 6 speaks, what we nonetheless do is Romans 7. Romans 6 is God's verdict of Paul that he was of no use. Romans 7 is Paul's reluctant admission that he was indeed of no use. God has seen us through and through. And having seen us clearly, He has already given up hope about us. He deems us to be worth nothing and declares that we are utterly useless. So what do we say in response? Were we also to say we are disappointed and consider ourselves useless, we would immediately be delivered. The reason God has allowed you and me to continue on and on to be proud and jealous and ill-tempered and dishonest is to let these and other sins so frustrate us that He will finally be able to show us that we are truly undone. Yet we make resolution after resolution, hoping all the time we may do better, though we end up no better than before. Such is the experience of Paul in Romans 7. Because Romans 6 is but a teaching, it requires the experience of Romans 7 to convince us of our total inability and make us realize it is a fact.

If anyone will confess he is utterly corrupt, I will say Hallelujah, amen, in response. I, Watchman Nee, am corrupt to the core. Hallelujah! Paul in his day was reduced to hopelessness. He had suffered many years. He was fit to be crucified. To day if you acknowledge you are useless, then you will quickly be delivered. It is quite true that all sinners who try to do good will never be saved. Yet likewise, all saints who resolve to do good will never experience victory either. Let us readily accept the fact that the cross of Christ has not evaluated us incorrectly. Let us gladly accept the Bible's verdict of us: I was useless yesterday, I am useless today, and will be useless tomorrow; I am forever useless.

Why does God wish us to accept the evaluation of the cross? He knows that by accepting its evaluation, we shall be willing at last to accept the Lord to be our holiness, perfection and victory. But if we harbor a little hope in our breast, God will have to bring us to no hope so as to enable us to accept the cross. God must bring us to this place by means of the Romans 7 experience so as to make us realize our disability once and for all and acknowledge it.

Strangely enough, however, even though many have at last seen their inability, they still do not experience the victory. Why is this so? It is because God has still another aspect in this matter of yielding for us to see.

(2) I Will Not

Yesterday I met a sister who took two hours to tell me her history of decades of defeats. As she talked, I smiled. I asked her whether she had failed enough to give up any hope. True, she confessed her inability, but she lacked one thing. Merely to acknowledge our inability will not give us victory. Acknowledging an inability is one thing, giving it up altogether is another. I told this sister it was good of her to acknowledge her inability, but did she realize that she was still trying to be able to overcome? If she knew she was not able, she should cease from her own works. She admitted she could do nothing, yet she was still hoping she could do something. So I reiterated the following to her a number of times: "Do you not see you are still working? Do you not understand that you are still attempting to overcome?" She had struggled and strived, and hence she could not overcome. Once again I urged this sister to accept the cross, to acknowledge her inability, and to cease from trying and expecting victory. She asked me what she must therefore do. I answered by saying that if she felt she needed to do something, then she would invariably fail. But her conclusion to the matter was this: "Yes, I admit that when I work, I fail; yet if I do not work, will I not fail even more?" Truly, the problem with many people is just here: knowing clearly they have neither strength nor usefulness, they still insist on struggling hard; and consequently, they have no victory.

Hence victory in the area of yielding has these two essential aspects: first, to acknowledge that God's evaluation of you is correct; and second, to cease even thinking of victory, because you have given up all hope. One brother said to me, "But I cannot believe." "Then tell God that you cannot believe," I said, "for He simply wants you to confess your unbelief."

To say with conviction that "I have been crucified with Christ" means that hereafter I do not care about victory or defeat because I lay everything in the hands of Christ. It means to let go of my hold on the matter of overcoming and to cease caring anymore, I will tell God that henceforth I commit myself to Him, and that victory is His business and not mine. One brother asked me how he could enter into victory. My response was to "let go." "Let go" means that "this is not my business to perform."

We may indeed have the heart attitude towards God that confesses, "I cannot but explode with anger. I cannot suppress

my temper forever, nor can I yield. But from now on, I relinquish my control, I let go of myself completely." Yet unfortunately, although we come to God and say we cannot and we will not, we nevertheless take ourselves back when we leave His presence. Oh, let us learn that what we bring to God of ourselves when we come to Him we must leave with Him when we go. He who knows how to cast off to God and leave it there will be delivered.

Once I brought a manuscript to a sister to be copied. I made a special trip to her for that purpose. But when I left I unconsciously brought it back with me. It was obvious she could not copy that manuscript even though she wanted to. This is the way we often pray today. With our mouth we say, O God, please help me. After prayer, however, we bring ourselves back home.

It is exceedingly important for us to let go. Let us pray, "O God, I cannot overcome, neither do I will to overcome, nor will I try to overcome." Such is the meaning of the Biblical statement, "I have been crucified with Christ." How excellent is that statement!

In the early morning Satan may accuse you of being nothing better, for you remain the same. Do you begin to worry? Do you attempt to do something about it? If only you will declare, "I knew long ago I am utterly corrupt, and I have given up hope: I will not try to improve myself," then you will immediately rise above the despondency. How marvelous this is, because it is a matter not of change, but of exchange. Simply lay hold of God's accomplished fact. If you had had any good, God would not have crucified you. Yet because you are so utterly corrupt, He has crucified you and put Christ in you. So that you must let go of yourself. And how do you put this into practice? You simply need to say, "God, I cannot do good, nor will I try to do good. O Lord, hereafter I am finished. I am absolutely incapable, and I will not even try to be able." Dare you let go like this?

An elderly physician of almost seventy years of age had a struggle with his cigar. One day in the meeting he mentioned about his fight to overcome cigar smoking. A young man who knew God well was there. He told the physician, "If I were you, I would not fight." "Do you know that with my fighting I still cannot overcome? Yet if I stop fighting it altogether, how much more trouble I will have!" "Not so," replied the young man. "If I were you, I would say to God, O God, I cannot help but smoke. Yet God, You take me off smoking." The physician saw the logic of the counsel. So he prayed out of his heart, declaring, "O God, I have no way to quit smoking. Now I quit trying. O God, I hand it over to you. I will not do anything but ask You to take me off smoking." He usually smoked twelve to twenty cigars a day, and he had smoked for fifty years. But after the day he yielded to the Lord, he told people the next day that so far as he could remember, that was the first morning in his life he had had no desire to smoke.

If you think you can be holy, you will doubtless fail. If you think you can be perfect, you will surely fail. If you think you can be patient, you will certainly fail. This is because God has already considered you beyond repair and reform. Can you say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ," I am utterly corrupt, I am wholly useless, and I deserve to be crucified? This is what Paul meant by his Galatian statement. I asked a brother in Peking about this matter of overcoming: "Are you finished trying?" "Thank and praise God, I am finished," replied that brother. This is an essential condition for victory. You must see before God that you are absolutely of no use and that you cannot be repaired or reformed. All you can do is to pray, "Lord, hereafter I commit all to You; from now on You will do everything for me."

Even with this conviction, however, some brothers and sisters who have confessed they are unable, even finished, and that they have been crucified with Christ, still find themselves defeated. Why do they still not experience victory? It is because they need one other word before they can experience victory in overcoming. And this is the second condition for victory.

B. Believing — "that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God"

Let us recapitulate what has been said up till now. God says I am utterly corrupt; I too say I am utterly corrupt. God says I am useless; I also say I am useless. God says I deserve nothing but death; I likewise say I deserve only death: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." This is a fact. According to fact, I no longer am living today. It is Christ who lives in me. Why is it no longer I who live? Two minus one is one; subtract Adam from me, and what is left, obviously, is Christ. The two live together, but one has been removed, so Christ is the only One left in us. This is fact. But how do I manifest it? In no other way except by believing.

(1) Believe God's Fact

The gospel of God tells us that He has given His Son to us. His Son has become righteousness, holiness and redemption

n (see 1 Cor. 1.30 mg.). Actually, we do not need to accept Him as our life in order to have Him share His perfection, patience and gentleness with us, because He already is our life. The Scriptures show us that Christ is our head (see Eph. 1.22, 4.15; Col. 1.18). Just as the head of a man feels and cares for and controls the body, so Christ is towards us who are Christians. We do not need to ask Him to be our head that we may be His body. Today He is the head, and we are members of His body. This is faith. Negatively, we have yielded; yet positively speaking, do we now believe that Christ is our head who is feeling, and caring for and controlling us? God's word states that Christ is the head; do you believe that He is at present caring for you?

The word of God also reveals to us that Christ is the vine and we are the branches (see John 15.5). It is not that He will become our vine and we will become His branches. It is not that in the near future when our spiritual life is more advanced than it is now we will then become His branches and He will become our vine. We should bear fruit as He does. We should be filled with virtues as He is filled with virtues. For He has given his "sap" — that is to say, His life and fruit-producing power — to us. He is now already the trunk, and we are already His branches. He is presently supplying to us His life with His perfection and holiness and all virtues. Do we believe this? Do we believe that He now is our trunk and we are His branches?

When you believed Him as your Savior, you were already perfectly joined to Him. Do you believe this? You do not need to figure out how you can be joined to Him since God has already made you and Him into one tree. Can you now believe that He shall be towards you even as the physical trunk of a tree is towards its branches? It is not that you bear fruit/or Him, but rather that He bears fruit through you.

God has also indicated in His word that the union of the Lord Jesus and us is similar to the way food is to us: Christ is the blood we drink and the meat we eat (see John 6.51-58). He is the One who sustains our lives. And just as physical food supplies the needs we have in us, without which supply we would die, just so is the Lord Jesus to us as our spiritual food. God in His word assures us that we are joined to Christ. Christ is our head, our trunk and our food. We do not need to ask God to give us power so that we can live as Christ lived, because He has given His Son to us to be our power of life, to care and live for us. He has given His Son to us that the perfection, communion, joy and riches of His Son may live out through us. Formerly, in our ignorance we always thought of establishing our own holiness, instead of submitting to God's holiness. Now, though, we have, negatively, ceased from our own works, yet this is not quite enough. God's word says that since He gives His Son to us as life, we must, positively, believe in Him as our life. Thus shall He manifest all that He is through us. Whenever and whatever our need is, He will supply it. Let us believe that He has already done so.

The genius of victory lies in its having no need to overcome gradually. By faith we know Christ is our victory. For victory is Christ, and faith brings forth all that is Christ's in us. The grace of God has already given the Lord Jesus to us; today by faith we accept all that God has given us so that the life, power, liberty and holiness of Christ may be manifested in our body.

This mystery of union is God's work by which the unsearchable riches of Christ become ours. Do we believe this? All that is Christ's is ours. Do we believe that God has given us His holiness, perfection, life, power and riches? God has joined us to Christ causing Him to be our head, our trunk and our food. Do we believe that Christ is now our righteousness and sanctification and redemption? Do we believe He is presently living out His life in us? God has indeed invited us, nay, He has commanded us to believe. Our union with Christ is patterned after the union of Christ with God; therefore, His patience, gentleness, purity and goodness are all ours. Just as in initial salvation we previously believed Him to be our righteousness, so today let us likewise believe Him to be our holiness. Yet how many fail in this respect. They know God's way of victory, but they do not have the faith. They know their inability, but they do not know Christ's ability. They see the total corruption of their flesh, but they do not see the riches of Christ as God's gift to them.

How do we receive this gift? By doing nothing; let us simply accept it. As we believe God's word, we receive His gift. This is the gospel. We receive by faith, and the Holy Spirit takes our faith to be the starting point for God's miracle to be done in us. People who have not experienced the mighty power of God may not take this seriously. But to the experienced, it is a precious reality. As we believe that all which is in the Lord is ours, the Holy Spirit will cause it to be truly ours. What a gospel this is! Whatever belongs to Christ becomes ours through faith! By faith this perfect life of Christ will daily live out itself in our body of death. With faith, it is not only "no longer I that live," but also "Christ liveth in me." Truly, beyond any doubt, Christ lives in us. Yet it is all because of faith.

(2) Believe You Received, and You Shall Have

God cannot make us believe what we will not believe. Some people, when they are asked to let go, do let go. But with out

hers, they may say they believe, yet they will wait and see. It is indeed important to yield, although the most essential thing is believing that the Lord Jesus is now living out His victory in us. Yield, and also believe. By believing what God says about Christ dying on the cross for us, we receive eternal life. Likewise, by believing that the Lord Jesus lives in us, we receive the life that wins.

I know the failure of many lies just here: they cannot believe that the Lord has already taken up His dwelling place in them, and thus they will not believe the Lord overcomes for them. Once I asked a sister if she had let go of herself. She said she had. "How did you let go?" "I told God I am utterly helpless, so I will give up trying," she replied. She then told me her prayer to God: "Hereafter, O God, I commit my all to You, be it victory or defeat." "Do you have victory?" I inquired. "I dare not say I do," she answered. "Why not?" "Because I do not feel I have overcome, nor have I seen any effect." I therefore said to her, "If you believe in God's fact and believe that the Lord Jesus who lives in you is victory, you should right away believe you have the victory. But if you look for results, you will never have it."

To receive the grace of victory is the same as to have received at conversion the grace of forgiveness. Do you not tell a sinner that because Jesus has died on the cross for him his sins shall be forgiven as soon as he believes? And if he believes, his sins are remitted. So you ask him if he believes, and he says he does. You then ask him if his sins are forgiven. He says no. Why? Because he has heard people say that if sins are forgiven there will be joy and peace; but he still does not have this joy and peace. He goes on to tell you that he is determined to pray until he obtains joy and peace, and only then will he dare to say that his sins are forgiven. Now if you hear such a response, will you not tell him that even if he prays for a whole year waiting for joy and peace, he will not have these feelings? When will he have both joy and peace? You will doubtless tell him that only when he believes will he have joy and peace. The same is true with respect to victory after forgiveness. As you fulfill the condition for victory by yielding and letting go of yourself, you should at once believe that now you have the life that wins. For the Son of God is waiting to live out His victory in you. Believe, and the result shall follow. Wait for the result, and you will never have the victory.

In the event you are waiting for the result before you dare to say you have the life that wins, then in reality what you believe is your own experience rather than the word of God. But as soon as you believe in God's word, then the experience, feeling and victory will follow. Paul did not say, "I feel I have overcome." What he declared was that "that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God." In spite of your feeling cold and unexcited, you may still thank and praise God that "that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God."

Do not look at me as though to find a most energetic person, for the truth of the matter is that I feel tired every day. Never is there a morning that I get up but what I feel frigid; never a day passes that I feel elated. Satan has come to me many times, accusing me: "You do not feel happy and you are so cold emotionally every day; is this Christ living in you? In days past you were frigid and without feeling; now you are still frigid and without feeling. Is this the victory of Christ?" When this happens, God gives me an answer at once: "If I feel, then I am living; but if I believe, then it is the Son of God who is living. I feel with my flesh, but I believe in the Son of God. I feel with physical senses, but I believe in the word of God." God says if you fulfill His conditions of yielding and believing, then Christ will live out His victory in you. Hence you should pray: "O God, I praise and thank You that what I feel is nothing, for in this matter the biggest lie of Satan is feeling; it is a close ally of the enemy himself. O God, I thank You that I can believe Your word instead of my feeling. For only Your word is true, whereas feeling is undependable." When you confront temptation in the form of feeling, boldly declare that you live by the faith of the Son of God.

As you let go and believe, you shall see the son of God fighting on your behalf. He will gain the victory for you. He will take away your bad temper, your hardness, your pride, your jealousy. Praise the Lord that from ancient days to the present hour there is only one Overcomer in the whole universe! Praise Him that all the people in the world are feeble! We are all defeated, we are all useless! The Lord alone is Victor! We cannot help but boast in Christ Jesus! For in truth, what have we that has not been received? Of what can we boast? Praise to the Lord, we have not changed, we have only been exchanged!

Let us fulfill these basic conditions: on the one hand, yield recognizing that you cannot and you will not; on the other hand, believe in the Son of God and live—believe in God's fact of Christ living in you and believe that you have received. This is victory. Hallelujah, all is done by Him! May we ask God to show us that all is done by His Son without our help. This, and only this, can be called victory.