

People Of Faith, Arise!

by Fred Pruitt

The Cross of Jesus Christ is not simply an historical fact of the Christian religion, but an eternal spiritual reality; it is the point of manifestation of life for all the universe. The Scripture says that the Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world, and that that very Lamb sits with the Father on the throne of the universe. The Lamb is Christ, the Light and the Life and the cohesion of all the things that are.

Christ is the *entry point* of light into the eternal darkness. In the beginning darkness was "*upon the face of the deep*" and God said, "*Let there be light,*" and there was light. There is no life for us outside of God, and there is no life *in* Him but by the Lamb slain. The Cross eternally brings forth the Life and Love of God, thereby showing and displaying the glorious wonders and majesty of the infinite Deity.

As it is in the eternities, so it is with us when the Cross of Christ does its work. Paul adamantly preached "*Christ crucified,*" because he knew that the Cross was the great life-giver to those who would believe, but a stumbling block and rock of offense to the false god of human reason. Human reason and men's philosophies cannot comprehend the Cross; they either die to it, or continue in their perpetual death by denying their need of it. Only in the Cross is Life, for Life is only in Christ. God kills no one; we were already dead. The Cross is the gift of resurrection life, to any who will have it.

We were dead, but we were dead only to God. We were alive to selfishness and pride and all types of sin. No matter how outwardly moral we were, without the Cross we were dead to the only One who is Life, but all too alive to the one who is Death. The greatest sadness of all is that Death, who is Satan himself, worked all his rage and hellish nature through and in us, stealing and misusing the wondrous faculties and capabilities of our precious human selves and turned us, creatures made in God's image, into selfish raging devils like himself.

There is no one on earth and no human philosophy that can rescue us out of that eternal prison of sin and death. Only the One sent from Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, by His shed blood and His broken body can save us. For the chains that bind us are real; the death that surrounds us is a living death. The wicked prison-keeper holds us fast with an eternal stranglehold of lying and deceit, which no human person, in his own power, could possibly overcome.

When we first come to the Cross of grace and life we soon learn that our "new birth" is more than a metaphor. We become aware of the fact that we are dead and in despair of all hope, that our sins are real, and that we must die real death within. We do not "turn over a new leaf," nor take on a new philosophy or system of religious beliefs, but we become a *new creation*. Instantly and miraculously we are translated from darkness into light, from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life, from miserable tormenting fear and wrath to unbounded glory and love. This is the new birth. We are "*born again*" (which is the most appropriate and truest term that our language affords). And when we've entered into the new creation, we see that there was nothing that could effect it but Christ crucified. Nothing in ourselves, no power in the Church, no set of rules, no sacrament or observance, no religious feeling or spiritual gift could do it, but absolutely and only the power of the slain and risen Redeemer dying and rising in us. This is eternal life.

However, few realize the all-encompassing grace of God and power of Christ crucified. Instead, we struggle and strive hoping to attain, and to do good works, when all along His grace in us is wonderfully and mightily sufficient. We read books that tell us what we ought to be, and what we should do. And we continually apologize to ourselves and to others for

not being what we think we should be. We are never “up to snuff,” or quite up to “par,” for we’ve not yet seen the next great secret of the Cross. It is impossible to see it while we are striving and straining to make something of ourselves so that God will be proud of us. For as long as we think that we clay pots are Potters, or that we temples are Gods, or that we branches are Vines, we can never see the depth of the limitless God in us: that our weak, problem-ridden, faulty, sometimes unruly selves are the very manifestation of the Son of God, the “*Word made flesh*,” who is the Deed-doer, the Willer, the Sanctifier, the Wisdom, the Power, the Strength, and the very Self of our selves.

The Son of God actually lives in and as us, so that we operate as sons of God, in our own worlds. This is *the glorious secret of the ages: the Son in His sons*. For there is only One Life, One Power, One Love in the universe, and that One is Christ; that Christ is in us and we are in Him. Therefore the life we live can only be His—there is no other. Paul said, “*to live is Christ*.” Paul knew that the secret of life was not in straining and striving to attain to some heavenly perfection, but in knowing his absolute emptiness and nothingness so that God only was “I AM” in him. The real fullness of grace—knowing Christ in His completeness in us—is nothing we can grasp by our mental power or attain by any obedience to rules or moral behavior. No, it is the glorious, unlimited free grace of our dear, yet incomprehensible, invisible God.

But what a secret to know, for in realized union life in Christ, where there can never be any more a hint of separation, we are no longer “Much-Afraid,” but “Grace and Glory.” We are those who have found the “*sabbath rest*” of God, who have “*overcome*” and “*go no more out*.” We have done battle with the wicked one, and our Champion, the “*Treader upon the Serpent*,” has crushed his head beneath us, and made our enemy our footstool. There is no more up and down, in and out, but instead the conscious inner awareness of eternal life and light swallowing up death and darkness in all our being. This is the true inner reality; the very heart of the universe. One thought—Christ, the holy Lamb slain—is All and in all. And we are heavenly people, living now and eternally in Christ in the heaven of heavens, in the bosom of the Father, the seat of power, where we take our place with the Ascended Christ.

This is the outgoing life of the Cross in which we are priests and kings, intercessors sent forth to heal and to give life. In our wonderful weakness He is perfectly strong, and He totally loves all His precious ones through us. Though our outward man is perishing day by day, still He in us is not failing, nor falling behind. His face ever shines out of our countenance for others to see (not for us to see), and He Who works all things after the counsel of His own will and Who before the foundation of the earth created good works for us to walk in, continually and perfectly carries out those works through us.

He lives as us, for we are the branches and He is the Vine. We are the very holy of holies, and He the Indwelling God and Glory. We are the containers— the earthen vessels— He is the Life-giving Spirit. And in His own way and time and according to His own perfect will He flows out of our lives as trickles, and streams, and rivers, and waterfalls, and deltas, and finally, as *oceans* of living water.

For our God only is Life, first to us, then in us, and finally as us. As Paul says, “*Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.*”

Therefore, people of faith in God, arise! Leave fear behind, for perfect love has come. Away with sin-consciousness, for the Cross has swallowed up death so that Christ only is your Life. Stand up and say with Caleb at the edge of the Promised Land: “*Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it . . . for the Lord is with us.*”