

CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S DEATH TO ATTAIN TO THE OUT-RESURRECTION FROM AMONG THE DEAD

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:10b-11; John 6:57; 1Cor. 9:24-26; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; 1Thes. 4:16; 1Cor. 15:52; Heb. 11:35; Eph. 2:5-6; Rom. 8:6, 11

NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS VS. THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

It is not easy to see that things that are not material, such as religion, philosophy, and culture, may be substitutes for Christ. This is not to say that all these things are wrong. They were used to preserve people for centuries. The point is that such ethical teachings are something other than Christ Himself. It is not God's desire that we live according to certain ethical teachings. Ethics is not part of the new creation. It is not something of Christ, of the Spirit, or of resurrection life. Anything that is of Christ must be in resurrection, in the new creation, and of the Spirit. Our ethics may be very good, but such an ethical living is not a living in resurrection. It has nothing to do with Christ, the Spirit, or the new creation. No doubt, ethical teachings are very good, but these teachings are not Christ. A first step toward living apart from ethics and in Christ Himself is to develop the discernment between ethics and Christ. No matter how earnestly the believers may seek the Lord, they are still under the influence of their national characteristics. In their daily living, they are influenced more by their culture than by Christ. We may be willing to count material things as loss for Christ, but we may not count as loss our culture or our national characteristics.

Even though we may love the Lord very much and daily take time to pray ourselves into the Spirit, in our actual living we may live in things other than Christ. We live this way automatically and spontaneously. How we need a vision of the excellency of Christ. If we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, we shall see that He far surpasses the best national characteristics. We shall know that Christ is far superior to every element of our culture. Only the excellency of the knowledge of Christ will rid us of the influence of all the things that are not Christ Himself. There is an urgent need for us to pray concerning this. We desperately need to pray that we may see the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. If we have such a knowledge in a real and practical way, all the elements of our human living which are not Christ Himself will be *put to death*. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ *annuls the influence* of our national characteristics and domestic philosophy. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ kills all the good things that replace Christ in our daily living.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION & CONFORMITY TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST

In 3:10 Paul speaks of the power of Christ's resurrection. The power of Christ's resurrection is His resurrection life that raised Him from among the dead (**Eph. 1:19-20**). Christ's divine life includes the element of resurrection. Even before He was resurrected, He could say to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life" (**John 11:25**). The reality of Christ's resurrection life is the Spirit. We can know the Spirit as the reality of resurrection. The Spirit of Christ is the reality of the resurrection of Christ. Thus, where the Spirit of Christ is, there is resurrection. Because this Spirit is now within us, the power of Christ's resurrection is within us also. We may use a carnation seed to illustrate the way resurrection life is released. Although a carnation seed is very small, it contains the life power capable of producing a carnation plant. Since this life element is already in the seed, there is no need for power to be added to the seed from without. The only thing necessary is that the seed fall into the earth and die. Should the seed pass through death, its shell will be broken, and life will be released, not from on high, but from within the seed.

The seed of God remains in all those who have been born of God. (**1 John 3:9**) This seed contains the divine life, and this life is the power of resurrection. In order for resurrection life to be released from within the seed, the outer shell of the seed must be broken. This requires suffering. During His entire life, Christ underwent a process of breaking so that the life power could be released from within Him. The divine life seed has been planted into our being. Now we also need to be broken that the life power within the seed can be released. If our outer man is broken, the seed within us will be able to release its life power. Eventually, this process of the breaking of the outer man will result in full conformity to the death of Christ. In this way the death of Christ becomes a model, or pattern, for our breaking. Then in our daily life we shall be able to apply Christ to our every need. Paul uses the expression "being conformed to His

death.” (1 John 3:9) Paul continually lived a crucified life, a life under the cross, just as Christ did in His human living. Through such a life, the resurrection power is experienced and expressed. The mold of Christ’s death refers to the continual putting to death of His human life that He might live by the life of God (John 6:57). Our life should be conformed to such a mold—dying to our human life in order to live the divine life. Being conformed to the death of Christ is the condition for knowing and experiencing Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. If we allow our circumstances to press us into this mold, our daily life will be molded into the pattern of Christ’s death. This was Paul’s concept when he spoke of being conformed to the death of Christ.

LIVING THE DIVINE LIFE BY THE HUMAN LIFE

It was God’s intention that the Lord Jesus live the divine life through the channel of the human life. This kind of living can be illustrated by what happens when a branch from one tree is grafted into another tree. The branch that has been grafted into the tree does not live out its own life; instead, it lives the life of the tree into which it has been grafted. This means that the life of the tree flows out through the branch which has been grafted into it. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He always put His human life to death so that the divine life within Him could be lived out. This is the pattern of Christ’s death. In the eyes of man, the Lord Jesus was crucified at the end of His ministry. But in the eyes of God, He was crucified throughout His life on earth. This is proved by the fact that He was baptized when He came forth to minister, as an indication that He had put Himself into death. There can be no doubt that the human life of the Lord Jesus was excellent. The Lord’s human life was not put to death because it was wrong in some way; it was put to death so that the divine life could be lived out.

As those who believe in Christ and who have been regenerated by the Spirit, we have both the human life and the divine life. No matter how good our human life may be, it must be put to death if the divine life is to be lived out. As we speak with our husband or wife, with our parents, with our children, or with those around us at work or school, we must put our natural life to death and not live according to it. If we put to death our natural life, we shall have the consciousness that we have another life, the divine life, within us. Once our outward natural life is put to death, the inner divine life will be released. Most Christians only put to death the negative aspects of their natural life. They treasure the good aspects and seek to preserve them. Hardly any Christians are willing to drop their national characteristics in order to live out the divine life. Although we may be willing to put so many other things to death, we hold these national characteristics as a priceless treasure. As a result, a basic element of our natural life is not put to death. This element then becomes *a huge rock* hindering the release of the power of Christ’s resurrection from within us. Thus, this part of our natural life remains as a frustration to the release of the divine life.

PROCESSED IN RESURRECTION

In verse 11 Paul goes on to say, “If by any means I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead.” To attain means to arrive at. This requires us to run triumphantly the race for the prize (1Cor.9:24-26; 2Tim.4:7-8). The out-resurrection from among the dead denotes the outstanding resurrection, the extra-resurrection, which will be a prize to the overcoming saints. All believers who are dead in Christ will participate in the resurrection from among the dead at the Lord’s coming back (1Thes.4:16; 1Cor.15:52). But the overcoming saints will enjoy an extra, outstanding portion of that resurrection. This is the “better resurrection” mentioned in Hebrews 11:35. The better resurrection is not only “the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:4-6), “the resurrection of life” (John 5:28-29), but also the out-resurrection, the resurrection in which the Lord’s overcomers will receive the reward of the kingdom, which the apostle Paul sought after. To arrive at the out-resurrection means that our entire being has been gradually and continually resurrected. God first resurrected our deadened spirit (Eph. 2:5-6). Then from our spirit He proceeds to resurrect our soul (Rom. 8:6) and our mortal body (Rom. 8:11), until our entire being— spirit, soul, and body—is fully resurrected out of our old being by His life and with His life. This is a process in life through which we must pass and a race for us to run until we arrive at the out-resurrection as the prize. Hence, the out-resurrection should be the goal and destination of our Christian life. We can only reach this goal by being conformed to the death of Christ, by living a crucified life. In the death of Christ we are processed in resurrection from the old creation to the new.