

*Nuggets and Gems from the Bible*

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DEATH

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***Living Stream Ministry***

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## CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S DEATH

It is easy to see that material things may be substitutes for Christ in our lives or may frustrate us from enjoying Him. But it is not easy to see that things that are not material, such as religion, philosophy, and culture, may also be substitutes for Christ. Throughout the years, I have met a good number of spiritual people of different nationalities who were genuine seekers of the Lord. However, although they were progressing spiritually to a certain extent, hardly any lived outside their national culture.

No matter how earnestly most 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. When Paul said that he counted all things loss ([Phil. 3:7-8](#)), he meant not only material things, but also things such as religion, philosophy, and culture. 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. But religion, culture, and

national characteristics were among the things Paul counted to be trash, refuse, in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. These things may be very good, but they are not in resurrection and they are not in the new creation. Moreover, they are not of Christ or of the Spirit.

## **THE NEED FOR THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST**

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.

It is rather easy for us to apply Christ as our peace, joy, and rest. But when we consider higher aspects of Christ, we find them rather difficult to apply. For example, Christ is the mystery of God's economy. Although we may know Him as the mystery of God's economy ([Col. 1:25-29](#)), it is not easy for us to apply Him in this aspect in our daily walk. The gap between such an aspect of Christ and our daily living is extremely great. We also find it difficult to experience Christ as the body, the reality, of all the positive things ([Col. 2:17](#)). 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 ([Phil. 3:8](#)). 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. From my experience I can testify that 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**

In [Philippians 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. Resurrection is abstract and mysterious; no one can define it. But 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.

## **CONFORMITY TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST**

This illustration of a carnation seed is in keeping with the revelation of the New Testament. As reborn ones, we have the seed of God within us. According to [1 John 3:9](#), the seed of God remains in all those who have been born of God. 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.

In [Philippians 3:10](#) Paul goes on to speak of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and of being conformed to His death. The fellowship of Christ's sufferings is our participation in His sufferings. During His entire life, Christ underwent a process of breaking so that the life power could be released from within Him. In particular, He was broken when He died on the cross. 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. If we need power, He will become power to us. If we need patience, He Himself will be our patience. This is to know Christ, to experience Him, and to enjoy Him.

In [Philippians 3:10](#) Paul uses the expression "being conformed to His death." This expression indicates that Paul desired to take Christ's death as the mold of his life. Christ's death is a mold to which we are conformed in much the

same way that dough is put in a cake mold and conformed to it. 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.

## **LIVING THE DIVINE LIFE BY THE HUMAN LIFE**

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He lived a crucified life. Christ had two lives—the divine life and the human life. It was God's desire that the man Jesus live the divine life by means of His human life. God did not want Him simply to live out the human life. Rather, it was God's intention that the Lord Jesus live the divine life through the channel of the human life.

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. The Lord's baptism by John indicated that He was living His human life under the killing power of the cross. His was a life in which the human life was crucified, so that the divine life could be lived out. What a wonderful living the Lord Jesus had!

This wonderful living implies the pattern of Christ's death. According to this pattern, Christ continually put to death His human life so that His divine life could flow out. This is the mold of the life of Christ and the death of Christ.

There can be no doubt that the human life of the Lord Jesus was excellent. But even such an excellent human life was put to death for the sake of the release of the divine life. Please pay attention to the fact that 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. This was the reason the Lord's human life had to be rejected, broken, and put

to death. The principle should be the same with us today. 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.

Do not think that a believer is conformed to the death of Christ only at the time of martyrdom. No, being conformed to Christ's death should be our experience day by day. 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. Then in our experience we shall be conformed to Christ's death.

### **A SERIOUS PROBLEM**

Most Christians only put to death the negative aspects of their natural life. They treasure the good aspects and seek to preserve them. Those of every nationality treasure their own national

characteristics and philosophy. The Chinese may pride themselves on their philosophical ethics, whereas Americans may boast of their frankness and openness. 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. If we do not treasure these characteristics consciously, we do so subconsciously. 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.

Treasuring part of our natural life creates a serious problem with respect to the experience of Christ. We are not willing for a certain part of our being to be put to death and conformed to the death of Christ. Thus, this part of our natural life remains as a frustration to the release of the divine life. This is the reason that, after years of seeking the Lord and experiencing Him, we may reach a place where we find ourselves stopped and unable to go on. In the early stages of our Christian life, we may have grown rather quickly. But because the "rock" of our national characteristics remains within us, our growth in

life is now held back. Many of us can testify that this is precisely our situation.

The reason for our lack of progress is that we have not been conformed to Christ's death in a full way. Years ago, you may have had much more conformity to Christ's death than today. Because you have not progressed in being conformed to the death of Christ, your growth in life has been held back, and your experience of the power of Christ's resurrection has been severely limited. This hinders you from further and higher experiences of Christ. Thus, instead of speaking of up-to-date experiences, you try to live on your past experiences and speak of them again and again.

## **PROCESSED IN RESURRECTION**

In [Philippians 3:11](#) 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 ([1 Cor. 9:24-26](#); [2 Tim. 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 (1 Thes. 4:16; 1 Cor. 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.

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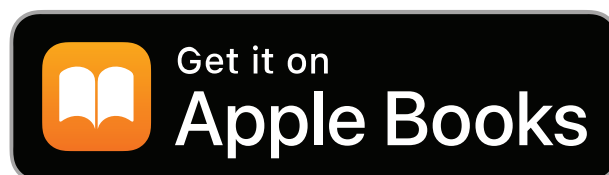
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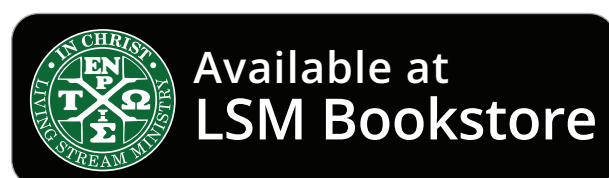


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