

*A Cross for Yesterday,
Today, and Tomorrow*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

On the Cross, Jesus Christ paid for the sins of the world and made a way for us to be saved. He made us His own through His death on the tree of Calvary. That moment in time marked the pivotal point in the history of the world. There, God established His Tree of Life.

What God did on Calvary takes care of everything about us. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and His Cross takes care of our yesterdays, today, and tomorrows.

Through the Finished Work of Calvary, we have been hid with Christ in God. As this booklet will reveal, what we have done is no longer an issue; who we are can be governed by Who He is; and, what we shall become is being fashioned according to His eternal purpose.

Chapter One
**THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF
THE CROSS**

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2).

“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

“(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” (John 7:38-39).

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water

that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

In the twenty-second chapter of Revelation, the Word of God speaks of a throne, a Lamb, and a pure river, clear as crystal, flowing out of the throne. Think of that scene and the awesome beauty of it.

This passage also mentions the Tree of Life on each side of the river and in the midst of it. No curse is there—just the Throne of God, the Lamb of God, and the redeemed people of God. I have received more joy and happiness from the blessings that come from the throne and that river because of the Tree of Life and the fruit that grows there.

The Past, the Present, the Future

From the very beginning of time, God has spoken of the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9). Through the years, I have pondered on that tree and the river. As you consider the river, there is nothing cloudy about it. It is all pure, all clean. And where God places a river, there is also a tree.

Why is it that the Tree of Life was said to be in the middle and on both sides of the river? It is because we need three dimensions of that tree to

take care of three dimensions of our lives: the past, the present, and the future.

According to the picture we have in Revelation 22, the tree yields fruit every month. First Peter 2:24 calls the Cross that held Jesus Christ “the tree.” And though it cost Him his life as a man, it was indeed a Tree of Life for all mankind. What He has done for me, He has done for you.

One aspect of the Tree of Life on the side of the river refers to the Cross that takes care of all the things that relate to our yesterdays. Jesus died on the Tree of Life, and on that tree He also bore our sins. This tree takes care of everything in our past. God’s Tree of Life takes care of everything pertaining to guilt, sin, failure, heartache, wounds, and bruises. What people have done to us is covered by the precious grace of God.

Taking Care of Today

That tree, as it stands in the center of the river, takes care of what is happening to us today, right now. Right now, God is taking care of every single thing through the Cross. Regardless of what we have done, regardless of how we have failed, we have that Tree of Life. Thank

God, it wasn't just for yesterday. It is for today as well.

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31).

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

Paul was saying, "I want you to know that I have received a Tree of Life, and God forbid that I glory in anything but the Cross."

The Cross takes care of my yesterday. The Cross takes care of my today. And then there's a Tree of Life for my tomorrow, my future. All three dimensions of my time are taken up in the "Eternal Is" of Jesus Christ: Yesterday is gone, Now just passed by, and Tomorrow doesn't exist.

Chapter Two

RESURRECTION LIFE CONQUERS DEATH

Think of how trees seem so barren in the wintertime. Nothing on the outside of the tree indicates life, and yet on the inside the tree is very alive. That is when the sap (much like blood to our bodies) is being produced and moves the strongest, bringing a life flow to every branch and twig. Then spring comes, and the trees turn beautiful with blossoms and leaves. All of the life on the inside is now flowing out.

Do not underestimate the winter times. Life is at work in the destitute, dark, and gloomy moments. Remember that when times seem their darkest, life is building up from the deep places. Soon, just as the trees blossom and create the beauty of spring, summer, and fall, the time of prosperity will come.

When we see everything prospering around us, it is easy to think only of how great and how

wonderful that is. But remember this: During the times of prosperity, all the life is flowing out. That would not be possible without the life that is developed deep within during the dark winter seasons of life.

Released from the Grave

“Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

“(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

“Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

“When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

“When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

“Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again.

“His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou

thither again?

“Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

“But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

“These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep” (John 11:1-11).

“Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

“But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

“Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:21-26).

“And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said

it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

“And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.” (John 11: 42-44).

Lazarus was sick and he died. When people are sick, they are taken to the hospital. When they are dead they go to the funeral parlor, and then they are buried. We were not born into this world to meet Jesus Christ as sick people but as spiritually dead people—people who are without a source of eternal life until we meet the Savior and are born again.

God quickens those who believe on Him. Even though we were dead in trespasses and sin, He meets us in death, where His resurrection power takes over. And, whoever believes on Him lives and never dies again.

That is what Jesus was trying to explain to Martha in the midst of her grief over her brother Lazarus’ death. She was upset that Jesus had not visited earlier as He had so many other times.

“Look, Martha, I *am* the resurrection and life, right now!” He told her. “All that I will be tomorrow, I am today. All that I was yesterday, I

am now. I am resurrection and life, Martha. He who believes on Me, though he was dead, he shall yet live. And whoever believes on Me will never die."

Jesus was led to the gravesite of Lazarus. He saw the unbelieving Jews wailing over the man's death. There was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, falling at Jesus' feet saying, "If You had been here, my brother would not have died!" With that, Jesus groaned in His spirit and wept, for He so well understood the pain of sickness and death and the pain of their sorrow.

The Smell of Sin, the Triumph of Grace

Standing near the grave, Jesus asked that the stone be removed. "What?" He was asked. "Surely, the body stinks." Behind the stone was a rotting, smelly corpse. The Lord wanted these people to get close so they could get a good idea of what sin smells like and what happens when bodies die and decay.

"Come close to the grave," Jesus was saying here. "Get a good look at what sin does to a body of death."

Finally, Jesus spoke, saying to Lazarus, "Out! Now!" That is exactly what He said, according

the original Greek text. At that moment, life came back into Lazarus, and he came forth from the grave. Jesus then told the people who stood there in amazement to help him get out of his grave clothes. The Lord brought in resurrection life and released the grip of death.

Reading on into chapter 12 of John, we find Lazarus alive and enjoying fellowship around the Gospel. Martha and Mary were back serving Jesus Christ. What a beautiful story of life coming out of death.

Chapter Three

THE FLOW OF THE FINISHED WORK

"Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

"Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

"And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.

"Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the

knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

“Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

“And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.

“Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

“Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed” (Ezekiel 47:1-8).

The waters flowed in all directions from the house of God. The river of life comes from heaven and travels through us wherever we go as believers. This is the life that has been reproduced as our ministry has taken the Gospel into all parts of the world.

God’s life flows from the Throne into our lives. This is why we are able to face terrific trials, one after another, and come out as more

than conquerors. God causes us to triumph, and no one can stop our victories.

The man with the line in his hand went east, meaning he was traveling the road of Resurrection. He measured out a thousand cubits, a figure that points to the perfect life of Christ. At this spot, the water in the river reached the ankles.

There is a great meaning to be grasped here. No matter where you are with Christ, even if you are just up to your ankles with Him as you start out in your Christian walk, you are okay. You are complete in Him, hidden in Him, and seated together with Him. This perfect Man has taken your sins away. He died, He was buried, and He was resurrected. Christ has taken you and hid you in Himself, and that guarantees that the devil can never touch you.

Power Through Prayer and the Word

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Next, the line went out another thousand cubits and the river was up to the knees. This speaks of our relationship to the Great Intercessor, Jesus Christ. When we pray, we are praying

with the One who intercedes before the Throne for us at all times. Not a moment goes by but He is standing before the Father, pleading our case.

Go out into the river another thousand cubits and the water reaches the loins. This means that categorical doctrine is at work in our hearts, souls, minds, emotions, wills, and bodies. The Word of God has now become totally operational in us.

The Crucified Life

Another thousand cubits are measured out and here the waters are over the head. This represents to us the Finished Work of Jesus Christ in our lives. We can no longer be seen. Everything about us is Christ because we are experientially crucified. Adam, our old man, is finally out of the way.

A scientist developed a functional electronic brain. This mechanism was fed numerous bits of information, which the scientist called the "word." This "brain" processed the information and developed conclusions. And these conclusions led to "experiences" that were recorded.

Now, this scientist was asked by one of his fellow scientists, who happened to be a Christian, what would happen if wrong information

were fed into the brain.

"I have no idea," he said. "My guess is it would come to wrong conclusions and wrong experiences. I have been troubled by this thought, because there is no way to erase a mistake."

"Well, we will have to fix that," the Christian told him. "I am going to help you put in a process that will cleanse a mistake so thoroughly that there is no record of it." He did, and that process was called "erase."

This man of God showed that scientist how to be saved and he was gloriously converted. Then, the two men proceeded to develop a process of cleansing, purging, and rebound for the "electronic brain," which we call a computer: "erase," "escape," and "refresh."

The Tree of Life will do this with our lives. It takes all that is wrong and makes it right. We are cleansed and purged, and the record of our failures is wiped clean by the Cross.

CONCLUSION

These thoughts about the Cross bring many people to my mind. One woman was struggling against the onset of cancer. She told me, "I don't mind dying, but I just don't want to leave my children."

"That's understandable," I told her. "But somehow, some way, the grace of God is going to pour into your life, and God will triumph."

God used her situation and brought life out of it, just as the spring brings life out of the tree following the winter season. God is so faithful to do this.

The Tree of Life is not there to bring out the best in Adam. Instead, it brings out the life that comes from the resurrection of Christ. This is a life worth experiencing. It is life that will never see death.

Sometimes the answers are difficult to come by—and yet, there is an unending river that flows from the Throne of God. That crystal clear

water proceeds from the throne where the Lamb of God is seated. And there, the Tree of Life reveals a Cross for our yesterdays, a Cross for today, and a Cross for our tomorrows.