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From: Mary Craig
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To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings...this was the cry of Paul's heart. Paul wanted to be made conformable unto Jesus' death that if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. He hadn't already attained, and he knew he wasn't perfect, for he was on the path. He desired to apprehend that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3.10-13)

The way to life is through death. Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to square off against Satan. Basically, the temptations were to misuse power, position, and privilege in order to seek personal advantage in reaching a personal goal. Jesus was sent by the Father to save His people from their sins. He was sent to establish the Kingdom of God. He was sent to glorify the Father by means of a personal, perpetual, perfect obedience. But Jesus would learn that obedience through the things which He suffered.

Jesus said, "No" when tempted to by-pass the Cross, to establish the Kingdom of God by means of force or usurpation. Jesus refused to bow down and worship Satan in order to meet His ambition. He refused to be a welfare king. He refused to be a "good-ole boy" in religious circles. He refused to take His destiny into His own hands.

Jesus came in lowliness of mind. Being in the form of God, Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation. He took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2.5-8)

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Paul talked about dying daily, about being dead to sin and alive to righteousness. He talked about dying to the Law because what hold does the Law have after you have died? He talked about having died and having one's life hid in Christ with God. He is only confirming and following something Jesus said.

If we would save our lives, we must lose them. We must deny our selves. We must be like seed falling into the soil. (John 12) We must follow the Lamb wherever He goes.



The way of the Cross is a way of death. The Cross was an instrument of death. To be crucified with Christ is to move beyond having our sins nailed to the Cross. It is to move beyond placing ourselves at the foot of the Cross. It is to move beyond imputation of sin, in which our sins and Adam's sin are imputed to Christ (laid to His account) and having Christ's righteousness imputed to us. It is to move ahead in the sanctification process beyond impartation of righteousness/holiness to identification.

We get it. We through the law are dead to the law that we might live unto God. We identify with Christ on the Cross, dying with Him; nevertheless we live. Yet it isn't we who live, but Christ who lives in us. Jesus came in the power of an endless life, and that life is in Him, and that life is in us...in Him. Thus the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. It's the grace of God. (Galatians 2.19-21) Crucify the flesh. Let us be crucified to the world and let the world be crucified to us.

Death is swallowed up by life. We are new creations in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5) The life that is eternal life can never be lost or taken away. This life is in Christ. He is the life.

The life of Jesus the Christ is a life of love, a suffering love. God loves the very people who are enmity with Him, who are enemies, who hate Him, who incur His wrath and pain His heart. Luther called it God striving with God. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. As Jesus bore the wrath of God, being the propitiation of God's wrath, taking the penalty for sin and in so doing satisfying the divine justice of a holy God, Jesus was demonstrating the love of the One who intercepts His own wrath. This is the tension of wrath and love, of justice and mercy. This is love absorbing wrath. This is life swallowing up death. This is death being swallowed up in victory, the victory gained through our Lord Jesus Christ.

To die to self is to empty ourselves as did Jesus (Philippians 2). Andrew Murray said, "Humility is the blossom of which death to self is the perfect fruit." Death to self is God's work; and it is a work of grace. Accept the times when God so moves that our best position before Him is to humble ourselves, lay ourselves face down before Him, be empty before Him, and just be dust. God commands. God prepares us, gives us great and precious promises. But we cannot obey apart from His grace. We cannot attain apart from His grace. God gives grace to the humble.



If we are to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection, we must fellowship in His sufferings, in that which He experienced. This is identification with the life of Christ. This is setting aside our own desires and feelings and mind in order to know the mind, heart, and will of God. This is to desire to take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ, to see as Jesus sees, to have His mind on things, to carry the heart of the Holy Spirit within us. This is to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service of worship.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. If we die with Him, we shall also surely rise with Him. As we see ourselves expelling our breath, that which is toxic and deadly, and taking in the Breath of God, the Holy Spirit, we will live. As we sow that which is mortal, in corruption, in dishonor, in weakness, earthy, natural, we are raised into that which is incorruptible, glorious, full of God's power, of the heavens, spiritual. (1 Corinthians 15.35ff) The process completes when we physically die; but much can happen prior to that.

If we do this, we must hang on because my experience is that the Holy Spirit has no fear. We must have a little "spirit of adventure" to be led by the Spirit. Nothing is impossible, the way He thinks. He's not worried about the future. His "faith" is more knowledge because He knows. He knows the end from the beginning. He becomes the all in all.



Now unto Him that is able to do
Exceedingly abundantly above
All that we ask or think,
According to the power that works in us,
Unto Him be glory in the church
By Christ Jesus throughout all ages,
World without end. Amen.
Ephesians 3.20, 21

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