I am crucified with Christ

by Elias Aslaksen

Introduction

It is one thing that Christ was crucified, but it is quite another thing that we are crucified, just as it is one thing that He did God’s will, but quite another thing that we should do it. His purpose in being crucified for us was not so that we could avoid being crucified, but rather that we should be crucified with Him.

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures . . .” 1 Cor. 15:3. “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him . . .” Isa. 53:5. It is well known that Christ was crucified for us, that He died for our sins, and that the punishment for our sins was laid upon Him; but that we were crucified with Him, and that we can and shall, by faith, experience this reality in our lives now, is generally unknown. It is something that most people have never even heard about. A few people have heard a little bit about it, even fewer are trying to carry it out, and fewer still have received grace to make it a reality in their lives.

The purpose of this booklet is that this very thing may become a reality for many. May it be so for you, dear reader.

1. I am crucified

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Gal. 2:20. Because we don’t live any more, we no longer live for ourselves! 2 Cor. 5:15. We now live for Him and for the others! This, indeed, is the heart of Christianity, the firm foundation of faith in Christ. Until this becomes true in a person’s life, he will suffer continual defeat and failure. As long as we live for ourselves, misery will result, because in us, that is, in our flesh, dwells no good thing. No one can manage to follow in the steps of Christ, do the will of God, and keep His commandments on his own.

Everyone’s flesh is totally depraved, irreparable, helpless, and impossible. The more we try to do good, the more we discover that it is hopeless. What are we to do with a man who is thoroughly corrupt and incorrigible? When we recognize and acknowledge that this is our state, it brings us into need and causes us sorrow. Thus God is able to open our eyes to see that we were crucified with Christ; not only was our certificate of debt (Col. 2:14) nailed to the cross, but also the debtor himself! Rom. 6:6.

This was included in the work of Christ; the Father reckons it to be so, and it is so. Most people have never seen or experienced this. They have never come to the place where they can say in truth, like Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live.” We cannot and certainly should not say this if we do not live a victorious life.
For instance, if I am offended, angry, or worried and then say that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me, then I am saying that it is Christ who sins—which would be blasphemous! Who lives a thoroughly victorious life in this world? Everyone who, by faith, is crucified with Christ; everyone who does not live for himself anymore.

This, dear reader, is the position of faith that we must take; and once we have received grace to take this position, it is vital that we are not moved away from it. These are great and unfathomable things! Nevertheless, God is also great, and His name is Wonderful! He, who in His mercy decided that it was good to call us to something so great, will Himself do this mighty work in us. 1 Thess. 5:23-24.

2. Our old man was crucified

“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” Rom. 6:6. “Knowing this” Paul says to the saints in Rome. To whom could one write something like this today? Who knows in truth that his old man was crucified with Christ?

Therefore it is my heart’s desire that as many as possible might come to this realization, this understanding, and this experience. Why? Because it is so tremendously effective! When Christ was crucified, our old man was crucified with Him. In actual fact, no one else was physically nailed to the same cross on Calvary. How then could our old man be nailed to the same cross at the same time, before he ever saw the light of day? It is because Jesus truly became the Son of Man, and in so doing, He partook of the same flesh and blood and the same self-will that we have.

He overcame or condemned this self-will; therefore, the Father reckons that our old man was crucified with Him and that we died in and through the body of Christ. Blessed is everyone who has his eyes opened to this! He has found the secret of the gospel, and the key to all victory and all glory!

The crucifixion of our old man, which Jesus accomplished on Calvary, must now be made a reality in each and every one of us. What is meant by our “old man”? Just this: that our mind agrees with and is bound to that which we know to be sin; and our body carries it out. All this can and must be crucified, or put off. Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:8-9. Naturally, we cannot crucify what we have not recognized as sin up to this point. That wouldn’t make any sense. But as soon as we receive light that something is sin, we can and should crucify it—put it off.

Whenever a person sins, that sin comes from the old man. Therefore, putting off the old man completely gives total victory over sin, as far as we have light.
3. The flesh crucified with its passions and desires

Galatians 5:24

What are we to crucify? Paul, that wise teacher of faith and truth says that we are to crucify “the flesh with its passions and desires.” What is thereby rendered ineffective? The flesh! What kind of works will then stop? The works of the flesh, some of which he has just named in verses 19-21.

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

The words “and the like” tell us that there are many more works of the flesh. The above-mentioned works are only a few examples. Let us name some other works of the flesh that are very common: lying, stealing flattery, hypocrisy, backbiting, unrighteousness, cruelty, impatience, stubbornness, irreconcilability, murmuring, complaining, vanity, pride, selfish ambition, covetousness, and suspicion.

Where is the boundary? The boundary for each individual is the light that he has at any given moment from his own conscience. Whatever a person does against his better knowledge results in a work of the flesh, or a work of the old man. “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.” Col. 3:9.

For instance, if something falls over or gets broken and a person gets angry about it, or if he flatters a rich person in the hope of receiving gifts from him, this proves that the flesh is not crucified and the old man is not put off, assuming that he knows that anger and flattery are sins—which people usually do.

4. “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”

Galatians 3:13

When our old man is crucified with Christ, that means that we are a cursed thing in the eyes of God (according to the flesh—as natural people). We must also become a cursed thing in our own eyes (according to the flesh) so that we do not pay heed to anything that comes from self and do not rely on our own understanding or feelings.

This is how all kinds of imagined greatness falls away, likewise much discussion and argument. Whoever sees himself as a cursed being according to the flesh has, in truth, found the right way, and it will help him to be well pleasing in the eyes of God and men. Above all, it will help each and every one to make this life of being crucified with Christ a reality.
5. The world is crucified to me, and I to the world

“But far be it from me that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” Gal. 6:14. The cross of Christ is truly the only thing worth glorying in, because on this cross our old man was once crucified, and on this cross we all have a chance to be crucified! We have only to take advantage of the opportunity.

Thus a blessed and powerful double crucifixion takes place: I crucify the world (reject it), and as a result the world crucifies me (rejects me). This is how I get rid of the world. I put a desirable and sufficient distance between it and me! Thus a gulf comes between the world with its passions and my new “passions”—a passion for the things of God, the things that are eternal, instead of the temporal things.

Oh, how good and necessary this crucifixion is! Most of God’s children experience untold misery in their hearts and lives because the reality of this crucifixion is missing. They certainly do not have the understanding that Paul had. On the contrary, they live with the terrible, gross misunderstanding that they should keep themselves as close to the world as possible without actually falling completely into it. They imagine that there are many advantages in doing so. But alas, alas! Just the opposite is true!

6. The offense of the cross

The offense of the cross must not be removed. Gal. 5:11. We must accept the disgrace, reproach, and persecution that accompany the cross. Gal. 6:12. “But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.” 1 Cor. 1:23. For religious people the offense is not that Christ was crucified for us, but it is the devastating implication: namely, that we are to be crucified with Him. And that means a total, uncompromising rejection of everything from our self—that none of it, not even the best, can be used or regarded as great. It is to be utterly rejected; it cannot be looked up to or relied on in any way at all!

That is distressing! The more a person is pleased with himself and the wiser he is in his own eyes, the more distressing it is! Yet this is and always will be true and will remain unshakable and unchangeable forever: that everything of our self is doomed; that, through Jesus Christ, it was nailed to the cross; and that is where it belongs!

7. The power of the cross

“Lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.” 1 Cor. 1:17. “For the word of the cross . . . is the power of God.” Verse 18. What power is there in the cross or in the word of the cross? It is the power that can put an end to the old man and his works, the power that frees us from sin, and the power that puts to death the works of the flesh. This power frees us from everything we have
already recognized as sin and from all the things that we will come to recognize as sin as time goes by.

The power and might of the cross, the work of the cross, is to crucify—obviously! The nails hold the one who is crucified tightly on the cross so that he cannot get away or go where he wants to go; and in a relatively short time, he dies. So the work of the cross is, simply, to put us to death according to the flesh. First, we die once and for all to our own selves, to our great and mighty “I,” in every area where we see it. Thereafter, we die little by little to the sin which we gradually learn to recognize and crucify by faith.

8. Bearing your cross

“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:27. “So he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha.” John 19:16-17. Bearing your cross can really only mean one thing: to help with your own crucifixion. A person who understands the necessity of being crucified will gladly do this.

Only hopelessly incorrigible criminals are crucified. Who wants to carry the cross onto which he himself is to be nailed!? Only a person who sees himself as a hopeless criminal according to the flesh and is, therefore, thankful that he can get rid of himself according to the flesh. Everyone who realizes that his “self” is the only thing in the way of his happiness and progress will gladly bear his cross.

9. At the foot of the cross, or on the cross?

Much is said and many songs are sung about coming to the foot of the cross, even though the Scriptures say nothing about it. However, the Scriptures do speak about being crucified with Christ—about being on the cross. Generally speaking, nothing is said about this.

All kinds of people stand at the foot of the cross, but only those who hate their own life unto death and love God with their whole heart hang on the cross—people who, through faith, become partakers of Christ’s death and life. They are the ones who want to walk in His steps no matter what the cost.

You can receive forgiveness for your sins at the foot of the cross, but not victory over sin and victory over your own nature. Victory is only obtained on the cross. Those standing at the foot of the cross can sin, but you cannot sin on the cross.

May the eyes of many be opened in these days to this wonderful mystery of faith!

10. To walk as enemies of the cross of Christ
“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.” Phil. 3:17-19.

Here we read about examples worthy of being followed by the church—so he must mean believers. Paul had often spoken with them about the sad fact that many of the believers walked as enemies of the cross. Today it is the same or even worse. It is not the knowledge that Christ was crucified for us that is being opposed. However, many are enemies of the cross of Christ when it comes to its work of crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires. This includes, among other things, the desire for all kinds of delicious food and drink for the belly and the desire for earthly things in general.

If a person wants to live for himself, he quite naturally becomes an enemy of the cross, because the purpose of the cross is to crucify our self-life. The Scriptures admonish us to live with contentment and moderation; they also teach us that luxury and pride are not of God; and if we love the world and the things that are in the world, the love of the Father is not in us. 1 John 2:15. All desire for the things of this earth is to be put to death on the cross. If a person does not want to let all this go, but wants to satisfy his belly instead at every opportunity and is in bondage to delicious foods; if he seeks after everything that is great, elegant, and splendid in this world, and after everything that has a good appearance; then he is quite naturally an enemy of the cross of Christ, because the cross is the sentence of death over all such things.

We can take a completely different example: If a man dominates an assembly, for instance, and wishes to continue to do so, then he is obviously an enemy of the word that says one should not lord it over the flock and that whoever wants to be the greatest should be servant of all. He is an enemy of the cross that will destroy that lording spirit.

People see fancy foods, social status, and being the one in control as things that are desirable. That is the problem! May the eyes of many be opened in these days that they might see how pathetically insignificant all this is, and at the same time see that godliness with contentment is great gain! 1 Tim. 6:6-11.

11. The three who were crucified and their followers

“And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left . . . . Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly; I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”’ Luke 23:33, 39-43.
On the middle cross hung the Son of God. He hung there because He voluntarily became the Son of Man, because He partook of flesh and blood like we, because He took upon Himself a human will, because He never did His own will but always denied it and did the Father’s will, because He never sinned, because He loved all mankind and sought to save them, and because He told them the truth. There He hung, He who in this world had always borne His cross and denied His own will, who, spiritually speaking, had always lived a crucified life from the day He was old enough to understand it.

On the other two crosses hung criminals, men who had always done their own will and had never done the will of God. Both had always lived in sin. Nevertheless, there was a great and very essential difference between these two criminals. One was hard and unbelieving, while the other was tender, acknowledging, and believing. One was impenitent, and therefore remained outside, while the other entered into Paradise with Jesus.

Neither of these men had walked in Jesus’ steps, and now they had no more opportunity to do so. That is how it is with every sinner who is converted only at the very end of his life.

We must all begin like the one thief, with a plea for mercy and forgiveness for our sins. We all start as “thieves.” But just because this thief is an example of how to begin on the way of salvation, that does not mean that he is to be our example as we continue. Many are called and given the opportunity to follow the One crucified on the middle cross and to walk in the steps which He left behind—He who never did His own will but always lived a crucified life.

The fact of the matter is that all people, whether they know it or not, fit into one of these three groups and follow one of these three crucified ones. Those who, by the grace of God, overcome sin belong to the middle group. Those who do not overcome but confess their sins and ask for forgiveness belong to the second group; those who are impenitent and do not ask for forgiveness belong to the third group.

It is significant that so many believers look to the penitent thief as their example and find comfort in him; they console themselves with the prayer of the publican for the same reason. It is very true that we must begin like this. But it is not true, as so many think, that we have to continue like this until the end.

This way of life, on the middle cross with Christ, is, unfortunately, little known and little used! Dear reader, which of these three will you follow from now on?

12. Come down from the cross!

“And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ Likewise the chief priests, also mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.’” Matt. 27:39:42.
He could have come down from the cross; but remaining on the cross was and is the crux of the matter.

Christ’s followers are reproached in just the same way. They are reproached because they do not live for themselves according to their own desires like other people but must constantly deny their own will. Yet it is not that they “must”; they have chosen to, and they want to, because it is God’s will and because, for them, it is the most rewarding thing they can do. We too, could be well liked and accepted if we would come down from the cross and behave like other people. But we prefer to follow Christ.

13. Denying yourself

“Therefore when Jesus saw that He was already victorious,...” John 19:28.

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’” Matt. 16:24.

“Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’” Luke 9:23

We see that it cannot be taken for granted that a person is following Christ just because he is converted. On the contrary, it is a big question even after a person has become His disciple. But, if someone really wants to follow Him, he can receive clear instructions as to what he must do if he is to succeed.

As long as we live, the big question is and always will be: What do we do with our self-will? Everything depends on this. We all have an enormous and complex self-will that always resists God’s will. It is evident that these opposing wills cannot be carried out simultaneously! If I do my own will, I transgress God’s will; if I do God’s will, then I go against, or deny or crucify, my own will.

If I want to walk the same way that Jesus walked, the way which he consecrated, then I must deny my own will daily and take up my cross onto which my self-will is to be nailed, because that is what Jesus did. There I will find His steps.

The sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of His followers are threefold:

1. Physical sufferings.


3. Suffering over all those who will not receive His Word and salvation.

Christ lived His entire life as One crucified. Heb. 12:2. He is the Master in this, and now He is teaching His disciples the same thing. When the Scriptures say that God condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3), we understand that Jesus denied His self-will so that it was never carried out.
To be crucified with Christ also means that a person in the practical situations of his daily life always, without exception, says “No” whenever he is tempted. To agree with temptation would be the same as coming down from the cross.

We enter into life through all sorts of temptations. That is the same as constantly saying “No” to our self-will. We must be faithful in this and make no exceptions whatsoever. We must never get tired of saying “No!”

14. That we might die to our sins

“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we might die to our sins and live for righteousness . . . .” 1 Pet. 2:24.

It is one thing that Christ died, but that we are to die is a completely different matter. Yet Peter tells us that this is the very reason for which Christ died. How can we possibly die now while we are still alive? By reckoning or considering ourselves to be crucified with Him and dead to everything that opposes God’s will, mind, nature, goodness, and righteousness. Thus we can, without hindrance, “live for righteousness,” as Peter writes.

Once we have placed ourselves on the cross and faithfully remain there (we must not get down from it), we will certainly die to sin. In a way it is true what people say in their unbelief, that we sin as long as we live. We just have to understand it correctly: As long as we are alive—as long as we are not crucified with Christ—we will continue to sin. We cannot stop. But now we have the opportunity to die by faith while we live—to die to sin. “How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” Rom. 6:2.

15. Losing our life for Christ’s sake

“‘For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.’” Matt. 16:25. “And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” 1 John 3:16. Usually people are afraid to lose their lives and will do anything within their power to save themselves from natural death. Rarely is a Christian required to lay down his physical life; however, he must not hesitate to do it if that should be required.

This is how Christ laid down His life for us too, yet it is in the spiritual sense that this word has its most profound application. What does it mean to “lay down our lives” in the spiritual sense? Our will is our life—our self-life. That is why a dying man’s testament is called “his last will.” To give up, deny, or sacrifice our self-will is to lay down your life or to lose your life. When, instead of my will, the will of another person is done, then his life remains and my life is lost. When our physical life is taken from us, it means that the will of another is done instead of our will.

Therefore, this scripture verse speaks about “denying ourselves” and “taking up our cross.” Where do we have the possibility of losing our self-life and self-will? On the cross! There is always one, and
only one solution—“I am crucified with Christ.” May this word burn itself deeply into the heart of each and every one!

16. Dead with Christ

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.” Rom. 6:8. “For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.” 2 Tim. 2:11.

To live with Him does not only mean to receive eternal life but also to overcome with Him, to overcome as He overcame, and to walk in His steps. Most people think that this is impossible in this world. In these verses we see the reason why people do not come to faith for victory in their lives. They do not believe that they have died with Him, that they are crucified with Him. Only when we believe that we are dead with Him is there any foundation for believing that we are partakers of His overcoming life.

Why is that? Because the old man is impossible. He cannot submit to God’s laws. However, if we get rid of the old man by partaking of the death of Christ, then we are rid of the obstacle that makes it impossible for any person to keep God’s commands or to do His will.

Can you now see this wonderful solution to the problem—to the mystery? “If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.” But not otherwise!! Not unless we, by faith, reckon ourselves to be dead with Him.

“But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by . . . .” Rom. 7:6. It is a well-known fact that Christ died, but that we are dead—that this death can work in us—is practically unknown. May this fact also become known and be appropriated by many.

We are dead to what we were held by. What held us? The old man, the power of sin, the flesh with its passions and desires—lying, anger, envy, disagreeableness, backbiting, murmuring, insults, anxiety, covetousness, suspicion, etc., etc.

Trying to get rid of these things in your life by just plucking them out or just polishing them up doesn’t work. Even if you could, to a degree, somehow get rid of them, they would soon reappear. However, there is this one perfect, wonderful way of escape! You can be crucified with Christ and die to all that which held you captive and to which you were in bondage. If you pluck the leaves off a tree in the summer, they will grow back again because there is life in the tree. However, when winter comes, you do not have to touch the leaves; they will fall off by themselves because in the winter, a sort of death takes place in nature. And as long as this “death” lasts, nothing will grow back.

Dear reader, may it soon be late autumn for your sinful nature, with a plentiful defoliation. Oh, may there be an everlasting winter for your flesh and an everlasting summer for your spirit! May your sun rise, as Isaiah says, nevermore to go down. Amen.
17. Being conformed to His death

“That I may know Him . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” Phil. 3:10. “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.” Rom. 6:5.

The sufferings through which we are made like Him in His death are the sufferings mentioned in the section entitled "Denying Yourself" under #2: “Those are the sufferings we experience when we deny ourselves and when our self-will suffers death on the cross.”

In the resurrection of the dead, the glory of each person will vary greatly. 1 Cor. 15:41-42. It will correspond exactly to the degree to which we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death during our time of grace. Paul had obtained a great deal of the life of Christ. What he had not obtained was that full and entire union with Christ in His death. This is what he pursued in order to lay hold of it, and this is what we should do as well.

If day after day and year after year, we faithfully reckon ourselves to be crucified with Christ and remain on the cross, then, little by little, sin will in fact die. On the cross we become conformed to His image. And in the same measure that we become conformed to His image, the spirit in our inner being is conformed to His glorious life.

In the resurrection we will receive a glorified body that corresponds exactly to the inner glory of our spirit that we have gained in the days of our flesh; and the measure of that inner glory depends on how much we have become like Him in His death.

Conformity to His death becomes conformity to His life. If such a death does not become reality in our lives, it is because we do not believe in it.

18. Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin

“Likewise you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. 6:11

If we believe that this verse means that we are to experience being alive to God in reality, then we have to believe that we must reckon ourselves dead to sin in reality. We are to be dead indeed, truly dead. This is really the whole point of the matter and the point of Christianity itself; it must be something real, something we experience! When a person is unbelieving (to a greater or lesser degree), as most people unfortunately are, it is so easy for him to interpret the word “reckon” as meaning something which is not real, something “pretend.”

This is the source of the problem: Thousands of Christians have tried to be dead, pretended to be dead, and rightly found out that it did not work; and because they have not grasped the real mystery of believing themselves to be dead indeed with Christ, they have given up seeking full victory over all sin!
How can a person make being crucified with Christ a reality? By faith and faith alone! By faith in the finished work, by faith that our own real death to sin was part of the finished work, by faith in the Scriptures, which deal with this subject. We must keep this mystery of faith in a pure conscience.

In other words, not “make believe,” but dead indeed.

19. Baptized into His death

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” Rom. 6:3. Unfortunately, not many people know that! Most people only know that they were baptized so that they could say they had been baptized. It was just something they did because it was supposed to be done.

However, baptism is the covenant of a good conscience toward God, as Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:21. Therefore, whoever is baptized makes a covenant, a contract with God. What is the covenant? To die to everything of our self-life, to keep the flesh with its passions and desires crucified every day for the rest of this life, to condemn all our self-will to death, and faithfully crucify it every time it asserts itself. It is a contract to put off the old man and keep him put off forever in order to be able to walk in newness of life. Otherwise walking in newness of life will be impossible.

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Rom. 6:4.

We are baptized into Him who died for us. And we are baptized to die personally: to die to our self and sin, on the cross of Calvary.

20. You died; therefore put to death
Colossians 3:3-9

Actually, we are all dead in and through the body of Christ. Precisely for this reason, every one of us personally has to see to it that this becomes a reality now through faith. This is why Paul says, “Therefore put to death.” In other words, see to it now that this becomes reality in you!

What has to be put to death? Everything! Everything that does not originate from God! Everything that is of the flesh! Therefore it is written in verses 8 and 9: “But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.”

Thus, “Put to death!” is truly a royal command to all of God’s people. May everyone be quick to obey this command!
21. Death is at work in us

“Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.” 2 Cor. 4:10-12.

What is the work of death? Only one thing: to bring into death, to transport into the kingdom of the dead. Generally speaking, it takes every person, one after the other, down into death—into the death on the cross on Calvary. Yet the work of death in us is not only to bring us into a physical death once and for all, but also that more and more of our self-life is brought into this death.

This is the process of sanctification for which we are exhorted to strive. The words in the above passages of Scripture are very significant: “Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” We need to keep this death close at hand at all times so that we can commit everything of our self-life to death as soon as we notice the slightest indication of it, so that the life of Christ can be manifested in our mortal flesh. Because whoever loses his own life will thereby find the life of Christ.

This is how death works within us. It ravages and lays waste our self-life, which is a great advantage to the spirit, the mind, and life of Christ, which can thereby fill us more and more.

22. “But if it dies”

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” John 12:24-25.

If it dies! That is the big question. How people insist on their own way! How they defend themselves! How they seek to save their life and make it appear to be better than it is—but to their own eternal loss! Almost everyone believes that it is extremely important to defend themselves, protecting their interests as well as possible, and using all their abilities, strength, talents, and knowledge to this end. They believe that gaining as much worldly success as possible is the important thing in their life—trying to get to the top. They don’t even have the slightest idea that it is the exact opposite that really pays.

In the verses prior to the above-quoted scripture we read of the occasion that caused Jesus to speak about the grain of wheat. It was the answer Jesus gave when He heard that there were some Greeks who wanted to see Him. Jesus perceived clearly that the motive behind their thoughts was wrong. They thought they would see someone extra great, someone very impressive and striking, someone like others they had already seen, but even greater!

What was Jesus? He was the Master in going the other way—in going down. He was meek and lowly of heart and had no form or comeliness, and no beauty that we should desire Him. Isa. 53:2. Now He was almost at the end of the way, about to be nailed to a cross outside the city at the place called The Skull with a criminal on either side of Him, despised and rejected by men, and finally forsaken even by God Himself!
Dear reader, if you will give up your entire self-life in all its many forms and go into the ground as a grain of wheat while you still live, and die there, then you will not have lived in vain in this world. Then you will bear much fruit—the same kind that Jesus bore.

What abundant fruit His life (His death) has borne!

23. On the cross we also die to religious work of men

Paul says the only thing that has any value is a new creation. First and foremost, it is sin that has no value and should not be allowed to exist any longer. Then everything else that is not part of the new creation must be brought into death. We are to die to everything that comes under the heading of “work of man.” It must all come to an end. And there is much that falls into that category!

What an abundance there is of well-intentioned works of man and well-intentioned ideas that originate in the human mind! They may be well-intentioned; nevertheless, they cause damage. They are all outside the Word of God. Whoever speaks in the church is to speak as the Word of God, and whatever is done is to be done in accordance with the Word of God.

The first thing in this category is denominationalism, with all its trappings. What is a denomination, anyway? Nothing but the work of man! Where do we read about such things in the Bible? What, for example, is a Lutheran Church, Baptist Church or Pentecostal Church? Chapter and verse, please! Where does the idea come from of taking the title of “Pastor,” “Priest,” or “Reverend” simply because one has been to some school or has some degree? Chapter and verse, please! It is pure vanity, a means of livelihood, a lust to dominate, and pure folly!

Useful? Necessary? No, it is only a weight, a plague, vanity, and ludicrous stupidity. When a “pastor” affects a “ministerial” or “spiritual” tone, he sounds like a fool to a spiritual person! It is almost enough to make you vomit. Luther was of the same opinion. Read Luther’s Pastoral Letter.

Some people say we must belong to a religious denomination and have our name on the church membership list. Where is that written? Chapter and verse, please! To which denomination did the first apostles belong, and the rest of the early Christians? Chapter and verse! Oh no, my dear, well-meaning and, in spite of all your reading, ignorant friend, it is all deception! We have no more use for it today than they did in the days of the first Christians. On the contrary, it causes incomprehensible damage.

Division is a work of the flesh. Gal. 5:19-21. It is a manifest sin, a work of the devil. You have to admit that to insist that such things are necessary for the furtherance of God's kingdom on earth is truly ridiculous!

Much of what is done among the people of God is purely the work of man. I have only mentioned a few of the more obvious examples.

It is not worldly people who display the most opposition to divine truths; it is religious people, just like it was in Jesus’ time, and especially the religious leaders who make their living from religion. They defend their living instead of loving the truth!

How miserable! How base! Why did they cry out, “Away with Him! Crucify Him!”? Because He loved them so much that He told them the truth!
24. To reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross
Ephesians 2:16

It is extremely difficult to get people to agree even on essential points—on the most basic issues. If people succeed at this, they think it is a tremendous accomplishment. Yet in Christ Jesus we are called to become completely and perfectly one, just as the limbs on the same body are one—one with one another—and one with God.

People are, so to speak, impossible. They quarrel and fight with each other and disagree over big things and petty things as long as they live! Yes, “as long as they live” is the crux of the whole matter. Therefore, Christ took all of us with Him—in and by the one body which He took upon Himself—onto the cross.

We can say, spiritually speaking, that the nails of the cross go through us all according to the flesh and hold us together. If we can see this by faith and continue to hold on to it firmly, then real unity is the result—lasting and ever-increasing unity.

Just as our crucifixion with Christ is the union of the individual with God, it is also, in truth, the union of individuals with one another.

How wonderful the word of the cross is, and how marvelous are its power and its results!

25. If you put to death—not otherwise

“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Rom. 8:13.

To live according to the flesh is the same as fulfilling the passions of the flesh (Gal. 5:16) or committing works of the flesh, which in turn is the same as committing sin, transgressing the law, breaking those laws of God which you knew beforehand.

If we continue to live according to the flesh, that is, to live in sin, then we will die. In other words, if we do not live according to the flesh we have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Then we are crucified to everything we know to be sin.

Besides this, if we then put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit, we will live. There is a difference between “the works of the flesh” and “the deeds of the body.” The former are things we know to be sin before we do them. The latter are things we realize are wrong only after we have done them, because we receive new light. Therefore, anything wrong that we do unconsciously—without our mind or our enlightened self agreeing to it—is a deed of the body.

Two things are necessary in order to “live,” to follow Christ: (1) That we no longer live according to the flesh so that the works of the flesh cease. (2) That the deeds of the body are put to death (judged, forsaken) one by one as they come to light. In other words: (1) I no longer do what I know to be wrong. (2) I cease doing things which new light reveals to be wrong.

We cannot hate—or crucify—things we do not know to be wrong. Crucifixion cannot extend any further than the light we have. However, it can and should work that far.
26. Will you die to yourself?

How can all this become a reality? By faith! We read, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life [the overcoming life], to which you were also called . . . .” 1 Tim. 6:12. And: “What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness . . . ?” 2 Pet. 3:11.

It is easy to understand that no one is going to strive to believe that he has been crucified to something which he loves and wants to keep. In other words, before we can lay hold of faith in being crucified with Christ, we must have grown tired of ourselves. Yes, we have to be so sick and tired of sin and all the activity of self that we are thankful to be crucified with Christ and receive Him as Leader and Lord over our lives.

If you have this attitude, God will see to it that you get the opportunity to lay hold of faith in being crucified with Christ.

Consequently, two things are necessary to be crucified with Christ: (1) To want it. (2) To believe it!

27. The powerful results of being crucified with Christ:

A Victorious Life

Unfortunately, not many people believe in an overcoming, victorious life. Many have tried it, but they have long since given it up as being absolutely hopeless. They don’t even give it a thought anymore, which isn’t at all surprising so long as they aren’t aware of the possibility of being crucified with Christ and dying while we are still alive.

It is impossible to get victory over sin if we are not crucified with Christ. The old man cannot overcome no matter how much you try to motivate him to it and no matter how pious you can get him to appear, but he can be crucified or put off. If we do not believe that the old man has been crucified, then an overcoming, victorious life is impossible. On the other hand, if we believe he is crucified, then it is impossible to sin. We believe one or the other. These two things cannot be united; they cannot co-exist. If crucifixion is present, then sin is absent. But if sin is present, then the crucifixion has not taken place.

Rest in God

One of the very greatest things we can possess in this world is rest in God—quietness and confidence under all circumstances, in all the storms of life, in trials and adversities, and in all sorts of unpleasant or uncomfortable situations.

This is quite impossible without being crucified with Christ. “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’” Isa. 57:20-21.

It is the old man who is so impossible and restless and who cannot be at rest. He is so anxious because he has so much to protect and so much he is afraid of losing. He is also full of distrust and suspicion. Because the old man is condemned to death, he is always filled with fear and in constant unrest.
So we can truly praise God for this marvelous solution and redemption: crucified with Christ! Finally there is rest, peace, and security. Then we enter into rest in God—the kind of rest that enabled Jesus to sleep in the back of the boat during the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

**Growth**

Spiritual growth is impossible if the flesh is not crucified. If we are not crucified with Christ, we are in the flesh and under the law. Then we are slaves of the law, slaves of sin—our development comes to a standstill. Of course, we can develop in Bible knowledge and other knowledge; we can learn how to make a good show, how to speak well and impress others, but our spiritual growth is utterly non-existent. We just sin and receive forgiveness, sin and receive forgiveness, endlessly.

It goes without saying that as long as the old man lives, the old troubles will come up time and time again—the exact opposite of growth and development.

Only when we have seen ourselves—by faith—as hanging on the cross with Christ, do we truly have any possibility for spiritual growth.

**Church Life**

There is a song that contains a significant phrase, “When the flesh is on the cross . . . then His glory and His oneness we acquire.” And in another song, “How blessed to meet together when the flesh is crucified.” Then the result is edification and every other good thing. Then personal relationships, which are the most difficult thing of all, become really blessed among the saints.

Just as an individual cannot make any progress without being on the cross with all that is of himself, neither can the church grow together—the growth of the body—unless each individual member is crucified.

In other words, the church of the living God, the body of Christ, consists only of those souls who are and those who become crucified with Christ. Those who are not crucified cannot participate in the growth of the body. The uncrucified old man prevents the growth.
A song

“Jeg er korsfestet med Kristus”

Think of this: our old man was so firmly
Nailed to Jesus' cross on Calvary.
Nailed so firmly, nailed so firmly,
To the cross with Christ on Calvary. Romans 6:6.

Thank You, God. It's done!

Trust it, everyone!

Faith in this gives vict'ry over sin!

Gives me vict'ry, blessed vict'ry

Over sin in all diversity. 1 John 5:4.

Think of this, that Jesus took upon Him
Flesh and blood like us here in this world.

Great the myst'ry, great the myst'ry,
Great the myst'ry now to us revealed.

Romans 1:3; Hebrews 2:17; 1 Timothy 3:1;

Ephesians 5:31-32

Think of this: when on the cross they nailed Him,
Then both you and I, we died with Him.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Faith in this will end our shame and sin.

Romans 7:4; Colossians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:15.

Now I reckon that I'm dead with Jesus,
For His flesh and blood were just as mine.

Root of all sin, root of all sin,
In His flesh was totally condemned.

*Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14; Hebrews 2:14.*

Not the fruit of sin alone, bore Jesus,

But the very root of sin, as well—

Up to Calv’ry, up to Calv’ry,

So that we in victory can dwell!

*1 Peter 2:24; Romans 6:6; Hebrews 4:15.*

Just as sour apples cease from growing

When the sour tree draws no more sap.

In like manner, in like manner,

The old Adam’s power, it shall stop!

*Romans 6:2; Romans 6:11; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:22;*

*Colossians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 4:10; Galatians 5:24.*

All your sins can now be put off from you.

In a moment, cast them all away!

Constant vict’ry, constant vict’ry!

For such faith let everyone now pray.

*Colossians 3:8; James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1; Hebrews 12:1;*

*2 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Timothy 6:12.*
Conclusion

He who despises the small but very necessary beginning (faith that Christ was crucified for us) and he who greatly praises this beginning but who despises or rejects the wonderful continuation (faith in being crucified with Christ) are equally foolish.

May God reveal this blessed secret of faith to many hungry and longing souls! Amen.

Elias Aslaksen