

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

“SELF MUST DIE”

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The teaching of the cross upon which every elect child of God must be nailed and crucified has somehow become an outdated doctrine. Yet, in the mind of God it is as necessary today as it was in the days that He passed this sentence of death upon the great apostle Paul. We speak of DEATH TO THE SELF MAN that lives in all of us.

II Cor. 1:8-10, “**For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.**”

One wonders just how much trouble and what kind of trials and pressure Paul and Timothy had that brought forth such a statement as this. “**We despaired even of life itself.**” In other words, they supposed that the hardships, trials and persecutions they were experiencing would be too much for their natural minds to withstand, and that actual physical death would be the result.

Paul said, “**We were pressed (pressured) out of measure.**” He could no longer measure in words the amount of pressure that the Lord was allowing to come upon them.

Verse 9, “**But we had the sentence of DEATH IN OURSELVES (to ourselves), that we should not TRUST IN OURSELVES, but in God which raiseth the dead.**” Self-confidence then is a deadly enemy!

We now know that God had called this man Paul to be His first Church Age Messenger. He was to receive the full revelation of the Word of God and give it the Ephesian Church Age. He was the Prophet Messenger to the *first church age*, even as our precious Brother William Branham was to the *last church age*. The high office that

such men hold requires special preparation. There must of necessity be a crucifixion, a slaying of the self man.

Verse 10, “**Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver. In whom we trust that He will yet deliver (continue to deliver).**”

Paul said He didn’t let us die a physical death from the pressure, He let us have some respite before we actually died. Then he said we trust that He will continue to deliver us from an actual physical death while He is in the process of slaying self in us (their own will and fleshly desires).

There must come a day when every Bride member is brought through the darkness and death of their own ability. All of SELF’S energies and abilities for knowing, understanding and doing must come to an end. The Lord was taking His messenger, Paul, through the agonizing process of crucifixion to his self-life. As far as his own abilities were concerned, he would stand bewildered, confused, numbed and dazed. Only then would he (and any of us) fall at the feet of the Lord and seek divine understanding and a new kind of strength.

Eph. 5:29, “**For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it....**”

No man can crucify himself! No! For when the first blow of the hammer strikes the nail, our natural man would run screaming from the second blow. We love our flesh. Self will never consent to a training school that would cause his death. Therefore, it is the Lord who must enroll us in such a

school, and it is He that must keep us in the classes.

By the Holy Ghost that lives in us, we must receive a revelation of what our Lord is about concerning death to self. The confidence that Paul had in himself was being destroyed. He was learning that his inner man and his outer man were not in harmony. He was finding that the greatest hindrance to his work was HIMSELF. He was made to see that his outer man would not, yea could not, submit to the control of the inner, spiritual man until smitten by God.

For this cause then, God in His mercy was having to take certain steps to bring about the destruction of the outer man (self). Paul called this work of God in him, “**The sentence of Death.**” In II Cor. 12:7-10 we see the *means* through which God produced this death in His servant.

Verse 7, “**And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, THE MESSENGER OF SATAN to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.**”

What was Paul’s THORN IN THE FLESH? Many are the thoughts set forth about it, but there is no need to wonder or guess. The above scripture settles it once and for all. Notice what the Word says, “**There was given to me a THORN IN THE FLESH.**” What was this thorn, Dear Brother Paul? He answers, “**The messenger of Satan to buffet me.**” God assigned a supernatural devil to *buffet* him.

The word *buffet* means to “strike blow after blow.” This messenger brought to Paul INFIRMITIES, which he listed as follows: reproaches, necessities, persecutions and distresses. (II Cor. 12:10) But thanks be to God, all these things were being ministered under the guidance of his Heavenly Father. I Cor. 10:13, **“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able. But will with the temptation also make a way to escape, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO BEAR IT.”**

The great thing to see here is that our Father orders these things into our lives and controls every detail of every trial. There cannot come a single thing that has not first been weighed in the scales of His *love*, then allowed because it is needful in producing the death of which Paul speaks. Our Lord has planned this death to SELF for every Bride member. If Paul, by the great revelations given him, needed to be brought down low in his own esteem, are not we, the Bride, now receiving the same revelations? Will not we also need to be buffeted to save us from spiritual pride? Yes, indeed we will! Consider the path that our Father ordained for His prophet William Branham to walk. We study his life and are amazed at how closely it resembled the life of Jesus Christ. But how often we fail to consider the suffering and trials that it took to produce such a life. Self does not die without a struggle. Death is far from being a pleasant thing to the natural mind. Nevertheless, God has ordained it, and He will see to it Himself. It involves much suffering, but His loving hand will guide us through it all.

Somehow, some way, someday God will destroy our trust in what we think we are, and what we think we know

and in what we think we can do. We are often found thanking and praising God for having been chosen as a member of His Bride. But do we consider that this also means we have been chosen to DIE TO SELF? Through much pain, suffering and distress we are to be crucified, the outer man broken.

QUOTE: BIRTH PAINS, PAGES 9-10, “Notice, in a seed’s birth the old seed must die before the new one can be born. So, therefore, death is hard anytime. It’s so painful and distressful. But remember, the seed is bringing forth a new life when it dies. (When self dies in us then the new life is Christ.) “.....My thought to you is (We must) take pain and distress and discomfort. Look how those Pharisees had to die to that Law. Through pain, distress and discomfort. BUT IT MUST BE. Now we find that the rain that brings forth fruit upon the earth is born in the fields of thunder, in a ragged, jagged sky. It takes that lightening and thunder blast, and the ragged, jagged fearful things to bring forth the soft drops of water. It takes pain to bring forth birth; it takes dying (For the new nature to come to the surface).”

CONT. QUOTE: PAGE 11, “I think the prettiest flower I have ever seen is our pond lily. This little pond lily, look where it came from (what it came up through). Dirt, muck, muddy waters and pressed its way through all of that. Working itself from the bottom of the pond, where the frogs and things are, and brings itself up through all of that. But, when it gets in the presence of the Sun it’s born. The little seed bursts into life. It cannot do that (burst into life) until it goes through all that process. IT’S GOT TO GO THROUGH THAT!”

“The sun itself is what is drawing it up. And when it gets fully above all

the dirty waters and muck, then it’s happy and it gives (out) its life freely. And it’s such a beautiful life when it gets into the presence of that which is drawing it up. I THINK THAT’S A BEAUTIFUL TYPE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.” (End quote)

Our prophet is teaching here that there is only one basic thing that can enable us to be useful to God, and that is for SELF to be dealt with. We believe that we are the WHEAT that is to be gathered into the Lord’s garner. There is life in each grain of wheat. There is a Seed of God in every Bride member, but there is a very hard shell on the outside. Until that shell is destroyed, the wheat cannot grow. John 12:24, **“Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die...”**

Death to this shell is brought to pass by the conditions that God surrounds it with. The temperature of the soil, the rain and the acids in the soil destroy the shell. In exactly the same way our Father destroys our outer man by the circumstances of life that He causes us to be surrounded with. The pain and suffering, the humiliations, the distresses, the perplexities all tend to crack our outer shell so the life of Christ can come forth.

QUOTE: BIRTH PAINS, PAGES 11-12, “Like a little chicken when it’s being born. It has to take its little beak and scrape back and forth until it breaks the shell out. We call it piping down in Kentucky where I come from. That’s the way a Christian has to do. You’ve got to stay there until you rot and die. It’s God’s provided way. You just have to get away from the old shell.” (End quote)

In this writing we are speaking to those people who have the Lord’s life inside. Therefore, we do not question the fact of the life. The question to the Bride is not how to obtain Life, but rather how to allow that life to come

forth. There will be blood from many wounds as God destroys our outer man and makes way for His Life to come through. Whether we understand it or not, God's purpose is to destroy our outer man.

We must realize that we are daily receiving from the Hand of the Lord His very best. All the trials and troubles of life are for our highest good. We must not pray for the Lord to give us anything different than what we daily receive. What He is giving us, in that He orders our steps, is His very best. The motive behind all His ordering of our steps is to slay the outer man.

Do not misunderstand at this point. The outer man is never completely destroyed. He will make the trip all the way to the rapture with us. Paul said, "I die daily." When the buffeting of Satan has produced cracks in our shell through which Jesus can flow out, we still have a need to be buffeted to keep our false pride from sealing up again the cracks in our shell. Do we understand that the Bride revival is dependent upon the destruction of self in us? To the same degree that self is destroyed in us will the Spirit of Christ flow through us, and produce the revival for which we wait.

But, let it be said that we are not in control of this destruction. The timing is not in our hand. In some lives it takes longer than in others. Only our Lord knows how to deal with the individual so that he is built by the pressures of life and not destroyed. But how sad it is that so many live in darkness concerning God's plan to destroy self in us. They do not see the Hand of God. All they can see is the devil opposing them, or the hand of man coming against them. They think that the way before them is just too hard, and they continue in darkness and despair.

We must have a revelation of whose Hand is dealing with us. There is no

other way that we can bow before Him and kiss the Hand that is continually giving us what our spiritual man has need of. The Lord can do no wrong. And since he is constantly in charge of His Creation, all things can do naught but work together for our good. There is none more beautiful than he who has been weakened in his outer man until stubbornness and self will give way to submission and meekness before God, preferring his brother and sister before himself in love.

We cannot produce this death in ourselves. To understand this, and to know that the Lord must do it for us, will keep us steady while He is accomplishing His work in us. We must hold for dear life to His promise, "**He who started a good work in us will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ.**" (Phil. 1:6)

The great problem is that we fail to understand what the "**GOOD WORK**" is that the Lord has set out to accomplish, and what means He will use to do so. The natural mind will always question and ask, "Why must these things happen?" Only the Bride will ever understand that they must be put to death in the outer man while they still live and breath in this flesh body. Only the Bride will accept the Word and submit to this death, and even they must first have their question of, "WHY?" answered.

QUOTE: SHALOM (SIERRA VISTA, AZ. 1-12-64) PAGES 33-36,
"Many people ask WHY?Sometimes they ask me WHY? Why must these things happen? What, why, why did this happen to me? Why did I start and (then) this happen? And I had this trouble here, and this upset me here, and I lost this here? Sometimes I (myself) have asked, 'Why? Why? Why when I was just a young minister starting out did God take my wife right out from under me, take my

baby right from beneath me, right beneath my heart? WHY did He do that?' I didn't know. I do now! I just held my hand in His and kept trusting."

CONT. QUOTE: "He knows every junction. He knows the rhythm, when it must take place. He knows what it takes to mold you. He knows what kind of material He is going to use. (He knows what He needs to make you into for His service.) (It's) The backside of the desert sometimes where God molds righteous men into sages and prophets. That's where men are beat out.Remember, He's never been able to touch the outside Church. IT'S ONLY THE ELECTED. (Church natural will not submit to the hardships; they become offended.)"

CONT. QUOTE: PAGE 35,
"SUFFERING FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE IS GROWING PAINS OF HIS GRACE. YES! SUFFERING FOR HIS WORD, SEE, IS GROWING PAINS OF HIS GRACE. Yes Sir! Just remember, it's the grace of God that has been given to you. Oh my! Like Paul said,he had an infirmity, something was bothering him. The devil would buffet him blow after blow. And he consulted the Lord three times to take it away from him. He said, 'I don't want this Lord. Take it away from me.' And then one night the Lord spoke to him. He said, 'Paul, My grace is sufficient.' He said (Paul said), 'Then I'll glory in my infirmity. I'll glory in it.'I've consulted you and you tell me your grace is sufficient, then this devil that bothers me is the growing pains of your grace.GOD let a messenger of Satan keep me beat down. He said, "**Then when I'm weak I am strong.**" Amen, amen. Growing pains of grace, we could stay on that a long time.....we're suffering His grace pains."

CONT. QUOTE: "Oh, He may permit crossroads (change our lives entirely). He may permit crossroads to

try us TO PERFECT US FOR HIS SERVICE. He may permit that now, Church, both here and on tape. He may permit the crossroads for our service (to prepare us for better service). Like He did Daniel. He gave Daniel a cross roads one day. You know he was a great man down in Babylon. (God) let the King turn against him and throw him in the lion's den. It only perfected him. Sure did! (He) let the Hebrew children go into the fiery furnace. They were determined to stand for His Word."

CONT. QUOTE: PAGE 36, "And sometimes it takes hard trials to break the bands of the world off of us. Sometimes God let's us have a little trial, you know, to see what we will do, to take you out of the world.Sometimes he lets a little trial happen. Maybe you've got a sick baby. Maybe something takes place right at the hour of death. Maybe someone taken from you, or something. What's it to do? To break you away (from self) to show you something, to open your eyes.Maybe God's doing that to break some of the worldly bands that's got you bound. (End quote)

Surely this is the hour when the battle ground is in the mind. While the

Lord is working to perfect us in our inner man, He sends Satan along on the journey to work on our natural, carnal mind to see if we can be turned from our course. There may be some who are unprepared for such a bitter dose of spiritual medicine, yet anyone with discernment will agree that the breaking of the outer man (self) is imperative if we are to experience the promised Bride revival.

Brother Branham spoke of a paradox, something that is very strange, yet true to the Word. To this writer we are looking at the greatest paradox of all, that our God would send at the same time, both a messenger of Satan and our guardian angel (our Theophany) to attend us through life's journey, the one to pull us down in the flesh man and the other to see to it that we are not pulled so far down as to be beyond remedy.

And so as the Holy Spirit continues working in our lives, we are confronted with one event after another. One thing after another comes to us. Each sent and controlled so as to discipline us, to break the shell of the outer man so that the inner man can come through. But we murmur and complain at our trials and losses. We fret and fume as His hand prepares a

way to use us. We question God and often become negative in our attitude, all of which must be repented of as the Bride makes herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)

How much we need for our eyes to be opened to God's purpose. He has not wasted even one thing in our lives. From the time of our physical birth until this moment all things have been meaningful. All the experiences through life, the troubles and trials, the heart breaks, the blessings, the times of joy have all been blended together by the Master for one single purpose, to CRUCIFY OUR SELF LIFE so that His life can be lived through us.

Therefore, Bride of Christ, if we have never before wholly and INTELLIGENTLY consecrated ourselves to the Lord, let us do so now. May we unconditionally give ourselves to Him without reservation saying, "Have Thy full sway with me." Let it be for the future of the Gospel, for the future of the Church as a whole, and also for my own life.

These things we pray and ask in Jesus Name, Amen!

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