

# The King's Highway

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### Crucified with Christ

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Many people are perplexed to understand the exhortation to give up self to Christ and to have no will of their own. We are so created that we must regard our own welfare. Self-love is implanted in our natures. If it would be destroyed, there would be nothing to which God or man could appeal. Neither threatening nor promise would move such a soul. Moreover, self-love has the approval of Christ in his epitome of the moral law. He makes it the measure of our love to our neighbor—"Love thy neighbour as thyself."

But selfishness differs from self-love in this, that self is exalted into the supreme law of action. The well-being of others, and the will of God, are not regarded. This is the self that is to be crucified. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, but it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20 - as punctuated by Alford.) The former ego of selfishness has met with a violent death, having been nailed to the cross, and Christ has taken the supreme place in the soul.

The very fact that this death was violent implies that it was instantaneous, a very sharply defined transition in St. Paul's consciousness. There is some one last rallying point of selfishness, a last ditch in which the evil ego intrenches itself. It may be some very trifling thing that is to be exempted from the dominion of Christ, some preference, some indulgence, some humiliating duty, some association to be broken, some adornment to be discarded. "Reign Jesus, over all but this," is the real language of that unyielding heart. This trifle, held fast, has been the bar which has kept thousands out of that harmony with the divine will which precedes the fulness of the Spirit.

But when this last intrenchment of self-will has been surrendered to Christ, he is not long in taking possession. The fulness, as well as the immediateness, depends on the faith of the soul in the divine promise. For there is a difference between the subjugation of the rebel and his reconstruction in loyal citizenship, between the death of sin and the fulness of the Christ-life. But the great distinctive and god-like feature of man is his free will. The memorable event, the pivotal point on which destiny, heaven, or hell hinges, is the hour of intense spiritual illumination, conviction of sin, when sin is deliberately chosen—"evil, be thou my good"—or voluntarily rejected.

Submission to Christ is an act of faith. It could not be possible without confidence in his veracity and goodness. Hence, justification and emergence into "the higher life" frequently take place when the only preceding act which impressed itself on the memory was not an act of faith, but of surrender, which is grounded on trust as its indispensable condition.

Some writers on advanced Christian experience magnify the will, and say to inquirers, "Yield, bow, submit, to the law of Christ." While the evangelist of the Wesleyan type says, "Believe, believe Christ's every word." Both

are right. Perfect trust cannot exist without perfect consecration. Nor can we make over all our interests into Christ's hands without the utmost confidence in his word. Hence, crucifixion with Christ implies perfect faith in him, not only when he is riding in triumph into Jerusalem amid the huzzas of enthusiastic men and the hosannas of willing children, but when the fickle multitude are crying, "Crucify him."

From the beginning Jesus intimated that discipleship must be grounded on an acceptance of himself, stripped of all the attractions of riches or honor. To know him after the flesh, from some selfish and worldly motive, is to fail to know him in that way which insures eternal life. To an enthusiastic scribe who had just seen the glorious display of power in the healing of Peter's wife's mother and the casting out of demons, and who was taking only a romantic, rose-colored view of discipleship prompting the thoughtless promise, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," Jesus replied, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." "Let him who follows me know that he is following a pauper, fed at the tables of friends, and soon to be buried as a beggar at their expense." If any man will be my disciple, "let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." Here, over the very gateway of the kingdom of Christ, stand chiselled the stony words "Crucifixion of self." Hence, it is no stern requirement of the so-called higher Christian life; it is the condition of the lowest degree of spiritual life. The higher the degree of life the higher the required consecration.

Hence, love made perfect requires as its antecedent that perfect surrender which, in the strong language of St. Paul, is crucifixion with Christ. The difficulty with average Christians is, that they faint beneath the cross on the *via dolorosa*, the way of grief, and never reach their Calvary. They do not by faith gird on strength for the hour when they must be stretched upon the cross. They shrink from the torturing spike, and from the spear aimed at the heart of their self-life. This betokens weakness of faith. But when the promise is grasped with the grip of a giant, no terrors, no agonies, can daunt the soul. In confidence that there will be after the crucifixion a glorious resurrection to spiritual life and blessedness, the believer yields his hand to the nail, and his head to the thorn Crown. That flinty centre of the personality, the will, which has up to his hour stood forth in resistance to the complete will of God, suddenly flows down, a molten stream under the furnace blast of divine love, melted into oneness with "the sweet will of God."

After such a death there is always a resurrection unto life. An interval of hours or even of days may take place before the angels shall descend and roll away the stone from the sepulchre of the crucified soul, and the

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