

A GUIDE TO FREEDOM THROUGH THE CROSS

GRACE NOTEBOOK

A Guide to Freedom Through the Cross

By Dr. Charles Solomon

As you read this, you may be in the midst of turmoil. Man may have failed you and God may seem too distant to help. You may have grown up not feeling loved in a way that met your needs. You may never have accepted or loved yourself.

The sense of inadequacy a person can feel in coping with life may run the gamut from mild depression to thoughts of suicide. Because of this, your relationships with those you love may be at the breaking point - or may already be broken seemingly beyond repair. If you are at the point of mild despair or utter desperation, this message is tailored to your situation.

God loved you enough to send a Person - His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ - to die on the cross for your sins, to raise Him again and to provide through Him all that is necessary for a victorious, abundant life. Today you either trust that His death met God's condition for the free pardon of your sins or you do not. If you do not, this simple message, and the diagrams to illustrate it, could transform your life as you receive His Life - the Life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It may be that you have trusted Christ for your salvation but now you are a struggling, defeated believer who has yet to find the way to victory in the Christian life.

If either of these situations describes your condition, please study the following thoughts with an open Bible and a prayer that God will illuminate these truths for you.

Your Design

The Wheel Diagram depicts man as a three-part being consisting of spirit, soul and body (I Thess. 5:23). With the body, through the senses, we relate to our surroundings. The soul, or personality, consists of the functions of the mind, will and emotions. The soul enables us to relate to one another. The spirit enables us to transcend our abilities, limitations and circumstances as we are regenerated or reborn and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The spirit is either related to Adam - Satan's family (see Line Diagram [below]) - or to Christ, God's family. We are born into the world as descendants of Adam and partakers of his nature. That means our spirits are dead to God and alive to Satan. We are in the wrong family! Since our lives came from our first father, Adam, and go back in an unbroken chain to him, we were actually in him when he sinned. Thus, we became sinners before we were physically born. This being the case, we are only doing what comes naturally when we commit sins (Rom. 3:23). Every life that remains in Adam will eventually end in Hell, as shown in the diagram (Rom. 6:23). Even though we may live very good lives, humanly speaking, we are separated from God unless and until we are born into His family by a spiritual rebirth.

Your Needs

The word "salvation" (1) in the Wheel Diagram means we must have a spiritual birth. Only in this way can we leave the life of Adam and be born into the life of Christ, which is an eternal life, as depicted in the Line Diagram (John 3:3). To be born spiritually, we must recognize or confess that we are in the wrong life and

therefore born sinners, with the unavoidable result that we have committed sins. Then we must accept Christ into our lives, because he died for our sins.

In being born spiritually, those who receive the Spirit life of Christ into their spirits by faith become one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). If they are to have victory over temptation and experience the peace of God in their lives, however, they must have assurance of their salvation. Assurance (2) must be based on the absolutes of God's inerrant Word or it will be fleeting at best.

Many who know (with their minds) that they have personally trusted the Lord Jesus Christ still lack genuine assurance because they have never felt saved. Due to emotional conflicts, many of which stem from childhood rejection, a person's feelings (or emotions) are seldom in harmony with the true facts, either as those facts are described in the Bible or as they exist in the physical world. How we feel things to be is likely to differ from how they really are until Christ becomes central in our lives and heals the damaged emotions.

The believer, old or new, must know that he enters into a secure, eternal spiritual relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:24) and that he can rely upon and enjoy that security (3).

Though many believers know they have accepted Christ, few understand and experience the fact that they are accepted in Him. Most have been forced to earn acceptance on a human basis and feel they also must earn God's acceptance (4), though they have already been accepted entirely through their Christ Life (Eph. 1:6). Every believer is accepted, but many never accept their acceptance, or righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21), by faith.

Few, too, are those who make total commitment (5) or total surrender of their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an irrevocable decision in which we give God our permission to do anything He wishes in us, with us, to us or through us. We give up all our rights.

Frequently, circumstances degenerate into near chaos after we make such a decision, because God honors our request for Him to take complete control of our lives. If He is to take control then we must lose control, and that is a process that seldom gives us joy! The circumstances or persons God uses to bring us to the end of our control of our lives are often not in themselves spiritual. They sometimes inflict undeserved suffering, but it is just such suffering that accomplishes God's purposes in our lives (1 Pet. 2:20-21; Phil. 1:23-30). At the time of the suffering or chastening (Phil. 3:10; Heb. 12:11), it seldom seems a cause for rejoicing, but it is the crucible that produces the holiness we long for.

God's purpose for the believer is to conform him to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Such conformity involves suffering. The "all things" of Romans 8:28 which work together for good are rarely seen as good in themselves, except in retrospect.

Your Inner Conflict

The "S" at the center of the wheel [above] represents the self controlled life or "flesh" (KJV). The flesh is in ascendancy in the lives of most believers for their entire Christian experience. It seeks differing forms, depending upon the individual, to get its needs met by some thing or person in either a negative or a

positive way. Money, material things, success, fame, sex, power or any of countless other things can drive or motivate a person and become his central focus when he is dominated by the self-life or flesh. Thus the "flesh" is merely the believer's attempt to live the Christian life in his own strength.

The "flesh," therefore, is a very serious problem for the Christian - as serious as idolatry. For when we replace the centrality of Christ with anything - even ourselves whatever we install on the throne of our lives becomes an idol. God must deal firmly with the flesh. And He does, usually by revealing the self-centered life's inability to cope until the believer, finding his situation unbearable, gives up on himself and becomes interested in exchanging the self-life for the Christ-life.

So long as self (flesh) remains in control, the conflicts depicted in the "soul" (personality) part of the Wheel Diagram will continue. They may become worse with age and increasing responsibilities. Occasionally, a psychologically well-adjusted self-life can cope with circumstances for most of a lifetime, but the results are far from fulfilling.

The psychological deficiencies, along with the guilt (both real and imagined), combine to produce varying degrees of frustration in the self-controlled life. The frustration must be dealt with. Some choose to dump it on others in the form of blows-physical or verbal-while some are more fearful of retaliation and suppress their hostility as best they can. Others suppress anger and frustration because they blame themselves for every problem and annoyance they encounter. When hostility and frustration are suppressed, for whatever reason, they will have an impact in the mind or emotions or both. Internalized hostility or anger often results in depression and/or anxiety in the emotions. Some persons can use their minds to implement various distortions or denials of reality. This enables them to escape the necessity of dealing with the real problem, the self-life.

When the psychological conflict drags on without remedy, however, it commonly results in somatic complaints, as illustrated in the diagram. The physical ailments, though real, actually are symptoms of a deeper problem-the self-life. So are the psychological problems depicted in the "soul" area.

Your Deliverance

These psychological and physiological symptoms begin to disappear when one sees how God can deal with the root problem by dethroning the self-life.

The Line Diagram shows the "life out of death" principle- God's way of disposing of internal conflict. The horizontal line represents eternal life, the life of Christ. By definition, eternal indicates no beginning or end. It exceeds the boundaries of time. Since Christ is God, He has always lived and always will. His life is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). As portrayed at the left of the line, Christ "became flesh" (John 1: 14) and lived in a human body for some 33 years. Then, He was crucified, buried and raised from the dead on the third day (I Cor. 15:3-4). He continues to live today (Heb. 7:25). Note that eternal life is not only a present and future reality for the believer but also involves the eternal past.

Until we are born again (John 3:3) we are not in the life of Christ-eternal life-but we are in the spiritually dead life of Adam. One can readily see that if any one of our ancestors, represented by the hatch marks on the diagonal line, had been missing, we also would be missing. Physically speaking, our lives had

beginning in Adam, so whatever happened to him also happened to us. When he sinned, we sinned. When he died (spiritually), we died-just as we would have died in our greatgrandfather if he had died before siring any children. Thus, since spiritual death is separation from God, we were all born dead (spiritually). We need forgiveness for our sins, but we also need life. The Lord Jesus Christ came to give us both-by dying for our sins and by giving us His resurrection life (John 10:10).

If you are a Christian, you already know this much. What you may not yet know is the following; For the believer, physical death is the gateway from life in the world and the presence of sin to life in Heaven and the presence of God. Similarly, another type of death is the gateway from the sinful life of Adam to the eternal life of Christ. When a person is "born again," he in the same instant dies. He is born into the life of Christ but he simultaneously dies out of the life of Adam.

Christ comes into our lives when we believe in Him and are born again, but that is not all. We are also made "partakers" of His life-eternal life. Romans 6:3 says we are not only baptized into Jesus Christ (His life) but also into His death. We can't occupy two opposite lives at the same time-the life of Adam and the life of Christ.

Your Identity

When we receive Christ by faith, it means that His death on the cross counts as payment for our sins. But it means much more. It also means that we enter into a new life-one that extends forever into the past as well as into the future. To put it another way, we exchange our history in Adam-the bad and the good-for an eternal history in Christ. We inherit a new "family tree!" By becoming partakers of Christ's life, we become participants in His death, burial, resurrection, ascension and seating in the heavenlies (Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:6). He only has one life, and this is the life we receive at our new birth (I John 5:11-12).

Unless and until we know by personal faith experience that we were crucified with Christ, we will continue to try to live for Christ, using the methods we learned in our old self-lives. The conflicts stemming from our history in Adam will go on plaguing and defeating us. But when, by faith, we take our rightful place at the Cross in union with Christ's death and resurrection, then-and only then can we truly "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4b) where "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

The Cross experience (understanding experientially our crucifixion and resurrection with Christ) is the gateway into the Spirit-controlled life (Gal. 5:16). It is life out of death, victory out of defeat-the purpose and answer for suffering in the life of the believer. Our path to the Cross, as well as the Cross itself, is a path of suffering, but it is the only path that leads to the end of suffering.

Are you weary enough of your internal conflict and constant defeat to put an end to it by faith? Are you willing to die to all that you are so you can live in all that He is? To do so is to exchange the self-life for the Christ-life and be filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit. To refuse to do so is to continue a walk after the flesh and to grieve the Spirit with a continuation of conflict, suffering and defeat.

Salvation Prayer

If you are tired of the anguish that results from doing things your way, Christ will free you if you will

sincerely commit yourself to let Him have His way. If you have never accepted Christ as your personal Savior, your first need is to let God create you anew by giving you spiritual rebirth. You can be born again if you can honestly pray like this:

"Heavenly Father, I have seen that I am a sinner, still in the life of Adam, and that I have committed sins. I believe you sent your only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die in my place for my sins. I also believe He rose again and now lives, and right now I receive Him into my spirit as my Savior. I surrender all that I am, all I have and all I shall be to you. I turn from my sins and my selfish ways to live my new life in Christ. Thank you for saving me. Amen."

Identification Prayer

If you have prayed the "salvation prayer," you have been born again, for God says He gives to all who believe in Christ the privilege of becoming His children (John 1:12). Now, whether you prayed for salvation just now or in the past, praying an "identification prayer" may help you to experience Christ's life of victory and peace. Before this prayer can be effective, you must be truly sick of your self-life; you must be under conviction by the Holy Spirit of trying to live the Christian life in your own strength, and you must be ready to give up control of your life. If this is your condition, pray in this manner.

"Father, thank you for forgiving my sins and taking me out of the life of Adam and grafting me into the life of Christ. Now that I am in Christ, I believe that I was crucified with Him, buried with Him, raised with Him and that I am seated with Him at your right hand. From this moment on, I choose to have your son, Jesus Christ, live His life in me and through me. I consider myself dead to sin and alive to you, and I am counting on the Holy Spirit to make me aware when I forget my death with Christ and try to live His life for Him in my own human wisdom and energy. I choose to yield my total being to you as an instrument of righteousness, allowing no part of me to be used for sin. Thank you for making Christ and his life real to me. Glorify yourself through me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

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by Charles R. Solomon, Ed.D., Founder and President of Grace Fellowship International (GFI). A pioneer of a Christ-centered approach to counseling called Spirituotherapy since 1969, he has written 9 books, including Handbook to Happiness, The Ins and Out of Rejection, and Handbook for Christ-Centered Counseling. This tract is a condensation of Chapter 2 of Handbook to Happiness. © 1996-2000 Grace Fellowship International. The book and printed copies of this tract can be ordered from Grace Fellowship. The tract is also available in many other languages at

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The purpose of Grace Notes is to highlight the dynamics of abundant living as summarized in Galatians 2:20: "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" (NKJV). Many articles are available online to freely use for personal ministry, newsletters, etc.. (To find an article by topic or key word, click "Grace Notes"/search.) Please pray for God's blessing on this internet ministry. Grace Fellowship is an international discipleship, counseling, and training ministry. (GFI does not

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Phone: 519-696-2500 <http://www.CrossWaystoLife.org>.) To request resources or inquire about hosting a conference, please contact us: [john@gracenotebook.com](mailto:john@gracenotebook.com).

Grace Notes editor - Dr. John Woodward  
from Grace Fellowship International  
President of GFI - Dr. Charles Solomon,  
P.O. Box 368, Pigeon Forge, TN 37868 USA.  
Phone: 865-429-0450 Fax: 865-429-0144  
Home page: <http://www.GraceFellowshipIntl.com>  
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