

# Walk in Spirit - Cross and Soul Life

by Watchman Nee

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*Watchman Nee emphasizes the transformative power of Christ's death and the importance of understanding our identity as the church in relation to God's eternal purpose.*

**Duration:** 16:26

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:21-23, Ephesians 5:25-27

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Spiritual Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the purpose of God in creation, which was to have a race of men who could commune with Him through the gift of the spirit. This race was meant to cooperate with God in defeating the enemy and undoing his evil works. The death of Jesus plays a crucial role in achieving this purpose, as it brings about a thorough understanding of the cross and leads to a place of dependence on God. Through the atonement, our sins are forgiven, but there is still a work to be done to bring us into possession of the life of God and fulfill His purpose. By receiving Christ as our life, we can attain what Adam never possessed and bring God's purpose within reach of fulfillment.

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## Transcript

We have spoken already of the purpose of God in creation and have said that he's embraced far more than Adam ever came to enjoy. What was that purpose? God wanted to have a race of men whose members were gifted with a spirit whereby communion would be possible with himself who is spirit. That race, possessing God's own life, was to cooperate in securing his purposed end by defeating every possible uprising of the enemy and undoing his evil works.

That was the great plan. How will it now be effected? The answer is again to be found in the death of the Lord Jesus. It is a mighty death.

It is something positive and purposive, going far beyond the recovery of a lost position. For by it, not only are sin and the old man dealt with and their effects annulled, but something more, something infinitely greater is introduced. Now we must have before us two passages of the word, one from Genesis 2 and one from Ephesians 5, which are of great importance in this connection.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept. And he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man made he a woman and brought her unto the man.

And the man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

In Ephesians 5, we have the only chapter in the Bible which explains the passage in Genesis 2. What we have presented to us in Ephesians is indeed very remarkable if we reflect upon it. I refer to what is contained in those words, Christ loved the church. There is something most precious here.

We have been taught to think of ourselves as sinners needing redemption. For generations that has been instilled into us. We praise the Lord for that as our beginning, but it is not what God has in view as his end.

God speaks here rather of a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. All too often we have thought of the church as being merely so many saved sinners. It is that, but we have made the terms almost equal to one another as though it were only that which is not the case.

Saved sinners, with that thought you have the whole background of sin and the fall. But in God's sight, the church is a divine creation in his son. The one is largely individual, the other corporate.

With the one the view is negative, belonging to the past. With the other it is positive, looking forward. The eternal purpose is something in the mind of God from eternity concerning his son.

And it has as its objective that the son should have a body to express his life. Viewed from that standpoint, from the standpoint of the heart of God, the church is something which is beyond sin and has never been touched by sin. So we have an aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus in Ephesians, which we do not have so clearly in other places.

In Romans, things are viewed from the standpoint of fallen man. And beginning with Christ died for sinners, enemies, the ungodly, we are led progressively to the love of Christ. In Ephesians on the other hand, the standpoint is that of God before the foundation of the world.

And the heart of the gospel is Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it. Thus in Romans, it is we sinned and the messages of God's love for sinners. Whereas in Ephesians, it is Christ loved.

And the love here is the love of husband for wife. God forbid that I should suggest that the Lord Jesus did not die for the purposes of atonement. Praise God he did.

We must remember that today we are in fact in Ephesians 5 and not in Genesis 2. Ephesians was written after the fall to men who had suffered from its effects. And in it, we have not only the purpose in creation, but also the scars of the fall, or there would need to be no mention of spot or wrinkle. Because we are still on the earth and the fall is a historic fact, cleansing is needed.

But we must always view redemption as an interruption, an emergency measure made necessary by a catastrophic break in the straight line of the purpose of God. Redemption is big enough, wonderful enough to occupy a very large place in our vision. But God is saying that we should not make redemption to be everything, as though man were created to be redeemed.

The fall is indeed a tragic dip downwards in that line of purpose. And the atonement, a blessed recovery whereby our sins are blotted out and we are restored. But when it is accomplished, there yet remains a work to be done to bring us into possession of that which Adam never possessed and to give God that which his heart desires.

For God has never forsaken the purpose which is represented by that straight line. Adam was never in possession of the life of God as presented in the tree of life. But because of the one work of the Lord Jesus in his death and resurrection, we must emphasize again that it is all one work.

His life was released to become ours by faith. And we have received more than Adam ever possessed. The very purpose of God is brought within reach of fulfillment by our receiving Christ as our life.

Adam was put to sleep. We remember that it is said of believers that they fall asleep rather than that they die. Why? Because whenever death is mentioned, sin is there in the background.

In Genesis 3, sin entered into the world and death through sin. But Adam's sleep preceded that. So the type of the Lord Jesus here is not like other types in the Old Testament.

In relation to sin and atonement, there is a lamb or a bullock slain. But here Adam was not slain, but only put to sleep, to awake again. Thus he prefigures a death that is not on account of sin, but that has in view increase in resurrection.

Then too, we must note that Eve was not created as a separate entity by a separate creation parallel to that of Adam. Adam slept and Eve was created out of Adam. That is God's method with the church.

God's second man has awakened from his sleep and his church is created in him and of him to draw her life from him and to display that resurrection life. God has a son who is known to be the only begotten. And God is seeking that the only begotten son should have brethren.

From the position of only begotten, he will become the first begotten. And instead of the son alone, the entrance of thy words giveth light. Some servant of God has been used by him to confront us with his living word.

And that word has made an entrance into us. Or perhaps we ourselves have been waiting before God, whether from our memory of scripture or from the page itself, his word has come to us in power. Then it is, we see something we've never seen before.

We're convicted. We know where we are wrong and we look up and confess, Lord, I see it. There is impurity there.

There is mixture. How blind I was. Just fancy that for so many years I've been wrong there and have never known it.

Light comes in and we see light. The light of God brings us to see the light concerning ourselves. And it is an abiding principle that every knowledge of self comes to us in that way.

Light has one law. It shines wherever it is admitted. That is the only requirement.

We may shut it out of ourselves. It fears nothing else. If we throw ourselves open to God, he will reveal.

The trouble comes when we have closed areas, locked and barred places in our hearts where we think with pride that we are right. Our defeat then lies not only in our being wrong but in our not knowing that we are wrong. Wrong may be a question of natural strength.

Ignorance of it. You can see the natural strength in some but they cannot see it in themselves. And we need to be sincere and humble and to open ourselves before God.

Those who are open can see. God is light. We cannot live in his light and be without understanding.

Let us say again with the psalmist, oh send out thy light and thy truth. Let them lead me. We praise God that sin is being brought to the notice of Christians today more than hitherto.

In many places the eyes of Christians have been opened to see that victory over sins as items is important in Christian life. And in consequence, many are walking closer to the Lord in seeking deliverance and victory over them. Praise the Lord for any movement toward himself, any movement back to real holiness and to God.

But that is not enough. There is one thing that must be touched and that is the very life of the man, not merely his sins. The question of the personality of the man, of his soul power, it is the heart of the matter.

To make the question of sins to be everything is still to be on the surface. Holiness, if you only regard sins, is still something on the outside, still superficial. You have not yet got to the root of the evil.

Adam did not let sin into the world by committing murder, that came later. Adam let in sin by choosing to have his soul developed to a place where he could go on by himself, apart from God. When therefore God secures a race of men who will be to his glory and who will be his instrument to accomplish his purpose in the universe, they will be a people whose life, yea, whose very breath is dependent upon him.

He will be the tree of life to them. What I feel more and more the need of in myself, what I feel that we all need, as the Lord's children need, to seek from God, is a real revelation of ourselves. I repeat that I do not mean that we should be forever looking in on ourselves and asking now, is this soul or is it spirit? That will never get us anywhere.

It is darkness, no. Scripture shows us how the saints were brought to self-knowledge, was always by light from God, and that light is God himself. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Peter, Paul, John, all came to a knowledge of themselves because the Lord flashed himself upon them, and that flash brought revelation and conviction.

We can never know the hatefulness of sin and the hatefulness of ourselves unless there is that flash of God upon us. I speak not of a sensation, but of an inward revelation of the Lord himself through his word. It does for us what doctrine alone can never do.

Christ is our light. He is the living word. And when we read the scriptures that life in him brings revelation, that life was the light of men, such illumination may not come to us all at once, but gradually.

But it will be more and more clear and searching until we see ourselves in the light of God and all our self-confidence is gone. For light is the purest thing in the world. It cleanses, it sterilizes, it kills what should not be there.

In its radiance, the dividing asunder of joints and marrows becomes to us a fact and no mere teaching. We know fear and trembling as we recognize the corruption of man's nature, the hatefulness of our own selves, and the real threat to the work of God of our unrestrained soul, life, and energy. As never before, we see now how much of us needs God's drastic dealing if he is to use us.

And we know that apart from him as the servants of God, we are finished. But here, the cross, in its widest meaning, will come to our help again. And we shall seek now to examine an aspect of its work which meets and deals with our problem of the human soul.

For only a thorough understanding of the cross can bring us to that place of dependence which the Lord Jesus himself voluntarily took when he said, I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge. And my judgment is righteous because I seek not mine own will but the will of him that sent me.

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