

Watchman Nee:

You believe in the death of the Lord Jesus and you believe in the death of the thieves with Him. Now what about your own death? Your crucifixion is more intimate than theirs. They were crucified at the same time as the Lord but on different crosses, whereas you were crucified on the selfsame cross as He, for you were in Him when He died. How can you know? You can know for the one sufficient reason that God said so. It does not depend on your feelings. If you feel that Christ has died, He has died; and if you do not feel that He has died, He had died. If you feel that you have died, you have died; and if you do not feel that you have died, you have nevertheless just as surely died. These are divine facts. That Christ has died is a fact, that the two thieves have died is a fact, and that you have died is a fact also. Let me tell you, You have died! You are done with! You are ruled out! The self you loathe is on the Cross of Christ. And "he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:7 Amplified). This is the Gospel for Christians.

Our crucifixion can never be made effective by will or by effort, but only by accepting what the Lord Jesus did on the Cross. Our eyes must be opened to see the finished work of Calvary. Some of you, prior to your salvation, may have tried to save yourselves. You read the Bible, prayed, went to church, gave alms. Then one day your eyes were opened and you saw that a full salvation had already been provided for you on the Cross. You just accepted that and thanked God, and peace and joy flowed into your heart. And now the good news is that sanctification is made possible for you on exactly the same basis as that initial salvation. You are offered deliverance from sin as no less a gift of God's grace than was the forgiveness of sins.

For God's way of deliverance is altogether different from man's way. Man's way is to try to suppress sin by seeking to overcome it; God's way is to remove the sinner. Many Christians mourn over their weakness, thinking that if only they were stronger all would be well. . . If we are preoccupied with the power of sin and with our inability to meet it, then we naturally conclude that to gain the victory over sin we must have more power. . .

But this is altogether a fallacy; it is not Christianity. God's means of delivering us from sin is not by making us stronger and stronger, but by making us weaker and weaker. That is surely rather a peculiar way of victory, you say; but it is the divine way. God sets us free from the dominion of sin, not by strengthening our old man but by crucifying him; not by helping him to do anything, but by removing him from the scene of action.

For years, maybe, you have tried fruitlessly to exercise control over yourself, and perhaps this is still your experience; but when once you see the truth you will recognize that you are indeed powerless to do anything, but that in setting you aside altogether God has done it all. Such discovery brings human striving and self-effort to an end (The Normal Christian Life, pp. 35-37).